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A marriage of convenience

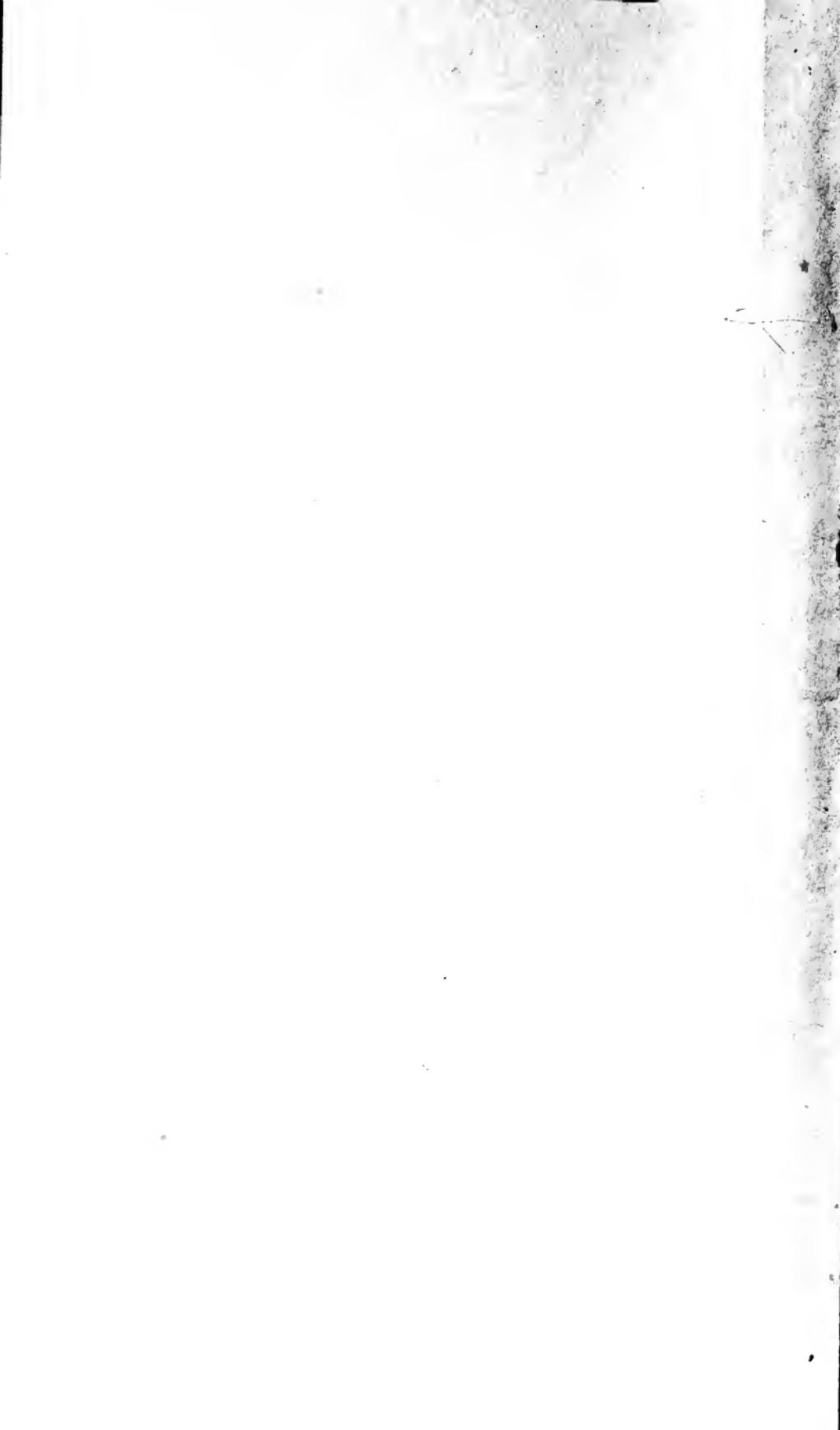
PR

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MARRIAGE OF CONVENIENCE

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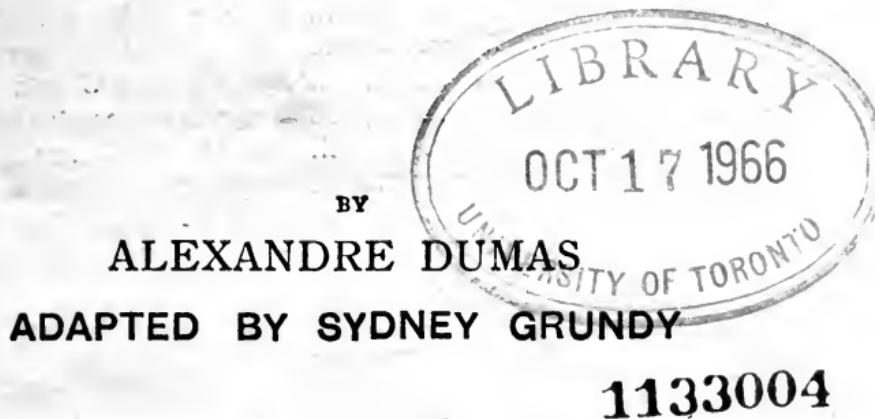


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A MARRIAGE OF CONVENIENCE.

PERIOD: LOUIS XV.

A COMEDY IN FOUR ACTS



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LONDON:
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WEST 22ND STREET,

A MARRIAGE OF CONVENIENCE.

*First produced at the Haymarket Theatre,
London, 5th June, 1897.*

PR
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G3 M34

CHARACTERS.

Comte de Candale	MR. WILLIAM TERRISS
Chevalier de Valclos	MR. CYRIL MAUDE
The General	...	...	...	...	...	MR. SYDNEY VALENTINE
Jasmin	...	...	...	...	...	MR. HOLMAN CLARK
An Officer	...	...	...	...	...	MR. CLARENCE BLAKISTON
A Suisse	...	...	...	...	...	MR. H. H. WELCH
A Footman	...	...	...	...	...	Mr. SUTTON BARNES
Comtesse de Candale	...	...	...	...	...	MISS WINIFRED EMERY
Marton	...	...	...	...	...	MISS ADRIENNE DAIROLLES

The scene is laid in Paris, about A.D. 1750.

PROPERTIES.

Furniture Louis XV.

Down L.—Large table, 1 small table (marble top). Down R.—One oak table, behind screen, 1 small table (glass top). Up L.—Four chairs, 4 armchairs, screen, sofa, 2 console tables, footstool, (on in Act 4 only).

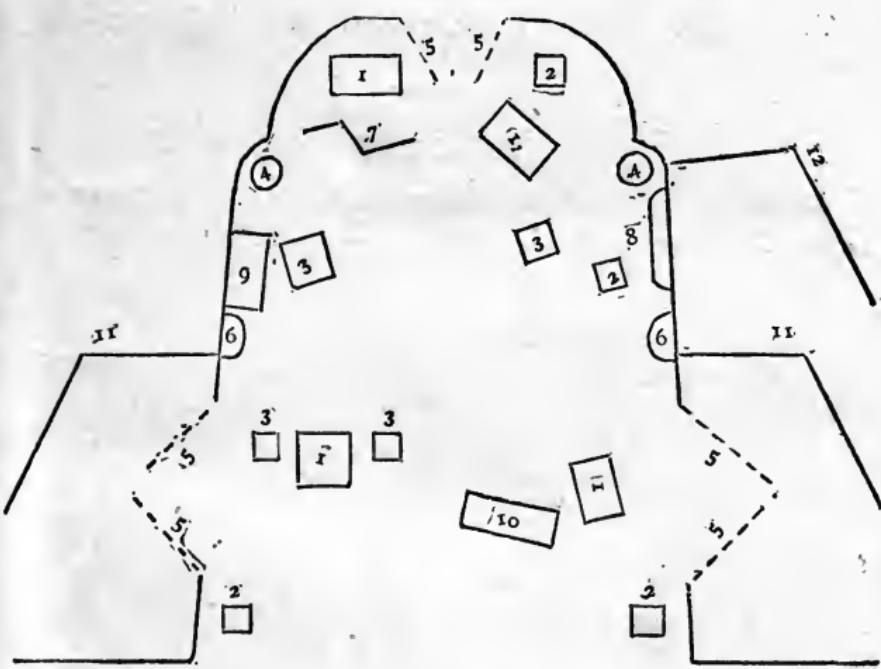
Clock on mantelpiece. Two candelabras on mantelpiece. Two vases filled with flowers on mantelpiece. Vases filled with flowers on console table R. Bouquet on console table F. Mirror on console table L. Two bouquets on console table L. Large vase on stand below screen R. Large vase on stand above window L. Basket of flowers on each chair down R. and L. Basket of flowers on ground by each chair down R. and L. Silver inkstand on table down L. Pens, ink, and papers on ditto. Silver hand bell on table down L. Silver hand mirror on table

STAGE SETTING.

Back Cloth.

Window Pieces.

Flower Bed.



Front Wing.

Front Wing.

Ceiling; Tesselated floor; Auberon carpet. Furniture, Louis XV.

KEY TO DIAGRAM:—1. Tables; 2. Chairs; 3. Armchairs; 4. Flower pots on stands; 5. Double doors; 6. Console tables; 7. Screen; 8. Window; 9. Fireplace; 10. Sofa; 11. Interior backing; 12. Street backing.

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down L. Silver pounce-box on table down L. Silver hand bell on table down R. Basket of flowers and bouquet under table down L. Basket of flowers on chair before window. Basket of flowers on chair by console table L. Four sconces on scene—one above door R. and L., one each side of c. doors. Plants in flower bed at back. The fire is alight.

Tesselated floor. Auberon carpet. Chandelier (electric candles).

HAND PROPERTIES.

Two letters. Bouquet for COMTESSE. Stick for SUISSE.

LIGHTING.

All full up. Almond and salmon limes. O. P. and P. S. shelves. Through window. On back cloth. Two open limes on back.

A MARRIAGE OF CONVENIENCE.

ACT I.

PROPS.

Letter for JASMIN.

Letter for VAL.

Baskets of flowers and bouquets everywhere on stage.

Late afternoon. Opening music.

SCENE :—*A boudoir in the mansion of the COMTE DE CANDALE. Doors R., L. and C. A window L. of flat. A screen R.*

MARTON discovered with three bouquets in her arms. She puts one on table L., crosses and puts another on table R., goes to fire and puts the other on chair before the fire. She then hums gaily the opening music, as JASMIN enters C. He gaily joins in with her singing, they take hands, he being L. of her, gives his R. hand, and trips down the stage a few steps, humming the tune of the minuet (opening music). They laugh and break away. Music stops.

The CHEVALIER VALCLOS is hidden behind the screen.

MARTON. (*eagerly*) Well, is it over? How has it gone off? (R. C.)

JASMIN. (L. C.) Oh, unexceptionally. Nothing could have been in better taste than M. le Care's address—the bride was on the point of fainting—everybody wept—

MARTON. You wept? (*laughs*)

JASMIN. At any rate, I had a lump in my throat. (*sits on settee L., sighs heavily*) Marton, the marriage ceremony is an affecting function.

MARTON. I wonder how it will turn out.

JASMIN. The marriage ? (*shrugs his shoulders*) Well, of course——

MARTON. (*nodding*) Yes, I'm afraid so. (*moves R. a step*)

JASMIN. Whatever the end is, nothing could be more auspicious than the beginning. Everything well considered—nothing wanting.

MARTON. (*gets over R.*) Except love. (*sits in chair R. of table R.*)

JASMIN. (*drawing his gloves off*) Love ! I was talking about marriage ; and from whatever point of view it is regarded no match could be more suitable. It resuscitates a noble family, which was on the point of extinction ; it re-unites the Candales and the Torignys ; it is approved by His Majesty the King, and the General settles six hundred thousand—six hundred thousand, Marton—on the eldest son of the union.

MARTON. And suppose there is no son ?

JASMIN. (*dryly*) When six hundred thousand depend on it, there is *always* a son.

MARTON. (*lolling in her chair*) Well, for my part, I shouldn't care to have my husband bequeathed to me. Just fancy marrying a man you've never set eyes on !

JASMIN. What does it matter ? You see him often afterwards. *I* consider it very thoughtful of M. le Marechal de Candale to arrange the marriage of his son and niece in his last will and testament. Young people are not to be trusted. Who knows whether but for this precaution, Mademoiselle de Torigny might not have thrown herself away——

MARTON. (*breaking in quickly on him*) On the chevalier ?

JASMIN. (*rises ; very surprised*) There is a chevalier ?

MARTON. Isn't there *always* a chevalier ?

JASMIN. In Paris. But she comes from the provinces—from a convent. (*going to c., and speaking in an undertone*) Is it possible that there was a chevalier in the convent ?

MARTON. A convent isn't a prison ; and when a young lady is at school there, surely her brother may visit her sometimes.

JASMIN. (*going back to settee*) But madame la comtesse has no brother ; and if she had—

MARTON. Other girls have brothers, haven't they ?

JASMIN. (*a light breaking in on him*) Oh, ho, and one of those brothers was a chevalier ?

MARTON. (*sighs heavily*) Poor madame la comtesse !

JASMIN. (*sitting*) And have we made no sacrifices ? We have nearly broken the heart of the smartest little marquise. (*raising his voice on "marquise"*)

MARTON (*rises*) There is a marquise ? (*saying "marquise" in a squeaky voice*)

JASMIN. Isn't there always a marquise ? (*imitating her tone on "marquise"*)

MARTON. Oh, ho ! (*moving c.*) And you call this an auspicious marriage ?

JASMIN. (*rising and moving L. C. to her*) I said, that nothing was wanting—(*puts his hands behind his back, and bends forward to her, mockingly*) not even the marquise.

MARTON. (*imitating his attitude*) And the chevalier !

Enter SUISSE, c., from R., cane in hand.

SUISSE. (*at door*) Monsieur Jasmin ?

JASMIN. (*turning to him and moving L. a little.*) MARTON moves R. a step) What is it ?

SUISSE. A lady is below, in a closed carriage, and she wants to speak to you confidentially)

JASMIN. (*going up to him*) Is that how you keep her confidence ? How dare you leave the door ?

SUISSE. But she gave me ten louis—

MARTON. (*moving up to him on his R. and taking a piece*) Five for me—

JASMIN. And five for me. (*taking the other*) That's quite another matter. Ask her to drive round to our private door. (*going down to door L. Exit SUISSE, c., looking round in a disgusted manner*)

MARTON. (*coming, L. C., to JASMIN*) The marquise ?

JASMIN. I expect so.

MARTON. What a time to call !

JASMIN. I must get rid of her, before they're back from the reception. (*Exit L.*)

VALCLOS. (*whose head appears round the screen*)
Hist !

MARTON. (L. C.) Ah ! (*screams. Turns and sees*
VALCLOS)

MARTON. M. le chevalier ! How did you get there ?

VAL. (*coming down c.*) I found a door open ; I walked in. I came into this room. It was empty. Hearing footsteps, I slipped behind the screen. It was you, Marton, and I was just about to emerge when Jasmin appeared. I waited till he went and here I am.

MARTON. (*at back of settee*) Yes, here you are ; but what do you want here ?

VAL. (*up c.*) To see her once more—to tell her that I love her.

MARTON. (L. C.) But you've told her so.

VAL. (*coming down c. a step*) To tell her that her marriage makes no difference, that she is my wife in the eyes of heaven—

MARTON. And in the ears of her husband.

VAL. What's her husband to do with it ? (*moving R. to chair R. of table*)

MARTON. This is his house. And they may come at any moment.

VAL. (*puts his hat on table*) I will wait for her. (*sits in chair R. of table, R*)

MARTON. (*getting c.*) Are you mad, M. le chevalier ?

VAL. Ah, Marton ! (*with his head in his hands*) to marry ! to forget me ! it is too cruel !

MARTON (C.) Nonsense ! You knew, six months ago, that she was to be married. It was all arranged, before ever you proposed to her. As for forgetting you, she's not forgotten you. She thinks of nothing else.

VAL. (*looking up and smiling gladly*) Does she remember her promise ?

MARTON. What promise ?

VAL. To be faithful to me in her heart—and to regard her husband only as a brother.

MARTON. (*laughing*) Madame la comtesse remembers it perfectly. She was telling me of it only this morning.

VAL. And what did you say, Marton ?

MARTON. I said it was utterly ridiculous.

VAL. (*annoyed, rises*) Ridiculous!

MARTON. (*going a step to him*) Have you ever seen M. le comte?

VAL. Have I ever seen M. le comte? He is my best friend. (*taking up his hat*) At least he used to be, till he became my enemy.

MARTON. Then you must know that he is much handsomer than you are.

VAL. What of that?

MARTON. A handsome face goes a long way with a woman, and when a fine figure is thrown into the bargain—

VAL. Oh, thank you, go on, go on.

MARTON. Well, it isn't easy to keep ridiculous promises.

VAL. (*crossing L., puts his hat on table L.*) Marton, you will drive me distracted. (*lies on sofa*)

MARTON. (L. C.) Don't make yourself too comfortable.

VAL. (*still lying on sofa, resting his head on cushions, with his eyes closed*) If Louise breaks her promise—if she falls in love with her husband—I shall kill him. (*in rather a meek tone of voice*)

MARTON. Don't make too sure of that. M. le comte is an excellent swordsman, and it may be you who will be the corpse.

VAL. Me, his best friend?

MARTON. I thought you were his enemy.

VAL. No, you misunderstand me. (*sitting up*) He is *my* enemy, but *I* am his best friend. He hasn't the least idea of my affection for Louise. (*rising*)

MARTON. That's fortunate for you; and the best thing you can do is to be off before he finds it out.

VAL. Not without seeing her. (*sits again*)

MARTON. (*impatiently moves away from him and returns*) M. le chevalier, do you want to compromise the lady you profess to love?

VAL. Not for the world.

MARTON. But you are doing it. A nice return to make for her fidelity.

VAL. Ah! if I knew that she *was* faithful!

MARTON. Would you go then?

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VAL. (*rising*) Instantly.

MARTON. Then, take my word for it, Mademoiselle de Torigny will keep her promise.

VAL. Marton! (*embraces her*) I have your word.

MARTON. Go, go!

VAL. (*giving her a letter*) But give her this for me. (*trots to door L.*)

MARTON. A letter? (*surprised*. VAL. *goes L.*) Where are you going now?

VAL. The way I came.

MARTON. And the way Jasmin went. This door, (*points to door R.* VAL. *trots over to it*) and down the little corridor, and you will find a private way out.

VAL. (*turns back again*) A private way out?

MARTON. (*shaking her finger at him*) But not a way in.

VAL. (*smiling*) Till to-morrow. (*exit R.*)

MARTON. To-morrow! Well, he's got rid of for to-day, at any rate. (*speaking through open door*) Not that way, to the right—then, down the staircase—open the door opposite. Now let me hear it close behind you. (*sound of a door closed. She closes folding doors*) Gone! and I hadn't even to tell a story. (*gets L. c.*) Mademoiselle de Torigny will certainly keep her promise. I won't answer for madame la comtesse!

COMTESSE. (*off c.*) Marton!

MARTON. Her voice! (*runs up c.*)

Enter COMTESSE, c., holding a bouquet.

COM. (*coming down L. c.*) Help, Marton! quick!

MARTON. Great heaven! (*puts her on sofa L.*) what has happened?

COM. (*as if she had collapsed*) I am married. (*drops her head on MARTON'S shoulder*)

MARTON. (*behind sofa*) Madame feels faint?

COM. Have you no salts about you?

MARTON. I'll get some in a moment. (*goes R.*)

COM. Marton! (*MARTON stops*) Don't leave me. (*puts bouquet on sofa*)

MARTON. But why is madame alone?

COM. Madame! (*shudders*)

MARTON. Where is M. le comte?

COM. M. le comte? (*shudders*)

MARTON. Your husband.

COM. (*shudders*) I have no idea. I drove here in a dream. Something was seated at my side. Perhaps that was he. (*leaning back with her eyes closed*) Then, you have nothing to revive me?

MARTON. Yes, I have some news. (*comes to her*)

COM. (*without opening her eyes*) News?

MARTON. I've just seen the chevalier.

COM. (*startled*) He is here! what will become of me?

MARTON. (*leaning over c. end of sofa*) Madame needn't be alarmed. He's gone.

COM. (*heaves a deep sigh*) What did he want?

MARTON. (*kneeling at her feet*) To see you for the last time, madame!

COM. Poor chevalier! but he has seen me for the last time, several times.

MARTON. (*arranging COMTESSE's train and still kneeling*) He is quite beside himself. Wishing he was dead and all that sort of thing. (*laughs*)

COM. How often have I wished for death! We can't die when we want to, Marton.

MARTON. (*rising*) And a good thing too; for we couldn't come to life again, when we changed our minds.

COM. Gone, without a word.

MARTON. Make no mistake, madame, he had plenty to say for himself.

COM. He left no message, no last wishes?

MARTON. This, madame. (*giving her the letter*)

COM. A letter! (*rising and taking it*) But how dare he? I am a married woman? (*tears it open*)

MARTON. Madame needn't read it.

COM. The very idea! To dare to leave a note for me. Marton, return this letter to M. le chevalier, unopened. (*gives her the letter and sits again*)

MARTON. (*taking it*) But it is open. (*holds the letter out*)

COM. (*takes it again and examines it*) So it is. Oh, Marton, this is very wrong of you. (*shakes forefinger at her*)

MARTON. (*tactfully*) It must have come open in my hand—or—in your ladyship's.

COM. Now, what are we to do? We can't return it, in this condition.

MARTON. But we can burn it.

COM. To be sure. (*gives it to MARTON, who goes to fire R.*) Stay ! Marton, are you superstitious ?

MARTON. Well, of course—

COM. This letter coming open in this way—was it a sign of anything ?

MARTON. (*coming down c.*) I think it was a sign that madame wants to read it.

COM. And that I *ought* to read it ?

MARTON. (*shrugs*) As madame says, she is a married woman—

COM. But *you're* not married, Marton. There's nothing to prevent *you* reading it.

MARTON. To myself. (*coming down c. a step*)

COM. To yourself. (*MARTON goes down c. a few steps and reads to herself, watched by COMTESSE. Curiosity getting the better of her*) Is it a long letter ?

MARTON. Not very. (*smiles*)

COM. (*piqued*) Why do you smile ? (*MARTON laughs. Piqued; a little louder*) Is it a humorous letter ?

MARTON. "Dear Louise—"

COM. Don't, Marton ! (*turns, leans her elbows on table and puts her hands to her ears, but with the fingers open*) I can hear you !

MARTON. "If one could die of grief, I should not be alive."

COM. Don't, Marton, don't !

MARTON. "But one hope has sustained me. I rely upon your promise to be true to me—grant me one word to cheer me. If not a word, a signal—nay, a few bars upon the (*bursts out laughing*) harpsichord." (*laughs*)

COM. (*plaintively*) I didn't quite catch—

MARTON. He asks for a few bars upon the harpsichord, to make him the *happiest* of men.

COM. Nothing more ?

MARTON. He is easily satisfied. (*COMTESSE removes her hands*) Oh, here's a postscript. (*the COMTESSE puts hands to her ears again*) "Needless to say, I shall pass the night under your window."

COM. (*removing her hands*) Under my window. Poor chevalier ! he'll catch his death of cold !

MARTON. I'll warrant he'll go home after the concert.

COM. You think so, Marton ?

MARTON. So, if I were madame, I would get the concert over as quickly as possible.

COM. Shh ! (bends her head, listens intently) Shh ! (MARTON rushes up c., looks off R., then rushes back crying : M. le comte ! (the COMTESSE rises quickly, utters a cry) The comte ! Come with me, Marton ! Don't leave me alone with him ! (she rushes across R. ; MARTON follows, lifting up the COMTESSE's train ; they both exeunt R. as

The COMTE DE CANDALE enters c. He pauses for a moment on the threshold, then goes leisurely to door R. and tries to open it.

COMTE. (smiles) Locked ! (shrugs his shoulders and comes to c.)

Re-enter JASMIN, L. ; he comes L. C., holding a letter in his left hand.

JASMIN. (coming L. C.) M. le comte is alone ?

COMTE. Very much so.

JASMIN. (showing the letter in his left hand) A letter for monsieur.

COMTE. From whom ? (gives JASMIN his hat)

JASMIN. As usual: (takes hat in his left hand)

COMTE. As usual ? (puts his cloak over JASMIN's right arm)

JASMIN. Madame la marquise.

COMTE. Well, give it to me.

JASMIN. (handing it to him) I didn't know whether M. le comte would have time to read it.

COMTE. (sits L. of table R.) I seem likely to have plenty of leisure. (reads) "Yesterday you protested you loved nobody but me, and that you never would love anybody else ; that your marriage was a mere matter of business, and that you would never humiliate me by preferring your wife." (JASMIN, whose shoulders have risen higher and higher with inward laughter, chuckles audibly) What are you grinning at ?

JASMIN. M. le comte seems to have been busy yesterday.

COMTE. (*puts letter on his knee and begins to take off his gloves*) A bachelor has a good many things to do the day before he is married. Amongst others, I had to say good-bye to the marquise.

JASMIN. As a bachelor.

COMTE. It was an awkward moment. It is never very easy to explain to one lady why one is marrying another. And I dare say I protested a good deal.

JASMIN. It was only polite.

COMTE. Sincerely, Jasmin, sincerely. I am very fond of the marquise; and I intend to keep my promises—or as many of them as I can remember.

JASMIN. It may be more difficult than M. le comte thinks.

COMTE. (*puts gloves on table and takes up letter again*) To prefer madame la marquise to madame la comtesse?

JASMIN. Madame la comtesse is so much prettier.

COMTE. My wife?

JASMIN. Her ladyship.

COMTE. (*becomes very interested*) What! is my wife pretty?

JASMIN. A picture, M. le comte.

COMTE. Really? I must have a look at her. (*reads*) "I do not doubt you for a moment; but you will be the first to understand that, in such a matter, words are insufficient. I must have proof. Come and have dinner with me." (*Pause; COMTE looks disconcerted*)

JASMIN. On monsieur's wedding day! (*sitting c.*)

COMTE. (*looks at door R.*) Why not? I find it just a little lonely here. Who brought this letter?

JASMIN. The marquise herself.

COMTE. (*smiles*) Dear little thing! Who saw her?

JASMIN. I, monsieur.

COMTE. How was she looking?

JASMIN. White as death, monsieur.

COMTE. White as death, was she?

JASMIN. But her eyes were red enough.

COMTE. She had been crying?

JASMIN. (*takes out his handkerchief and wipes an imaginary tear from his eye*) As she spoke to me, they filled with tears, and her voice trembled so she could scarcely speak.

COMTE. (*kisses the letter*) Poor little marquise!

(rising) I must console her. Order the coupe, Jasmin. (puts letter in his pocket)

JASMIN. On monsieur's wedding day ?

COMTE. Order the coupe, Jasmin, and at once. (COMTE goes to door R. and knocks. Exit JASMIN, L.)

MARTON. (off) Who's there ?

COMTE. I, Marton.

MARTON. What does monsieur want ?

COMTE. A moment's interview with madame la comtesse. Present my compliments, and ask her ladyship if she will grant me the honor of her company ; or, if she prefers it, I will wait on her. (a moment's silence) No answer. A consultation.

MARTON. (off) Madame la comtesse prefers not to receive monsieur, but she will join him in a moment.

COMTE. (crosses to L.) I am not sorry, I am dining out to-night.

Re-enter COMTESSE, R. ; she curtseys. COMTE bows to her.

COM. (R. C.) Monsieur le comte, I have obeyed your orders. (MARTON shuts the door)

COMTE. My orders, madame la comtesse ? My message has been strangely misdelivered, if it has assumed the complexion of a command. It was a request which I had the honor to submit.

COM. (smiling) Oh, I am not so ignorant as you suppose.

COMTE. Madame !

COM. I know that a husband has a right to command.

COMTE. May I ask where your ladyship has gathered so false an impression ?

COM. (R. C.) From my aunt.

COMTE. (L. C.) Madame de Torigny ! Ha—ha—ha—that accounts for everything. She belongs to the last generation. But we live in a more civilized age ; and under the fifteenth Louis, it is the wife who commands, the husband who obeys. (bowing)

COM. Indeed, monsieur. I have no wish to command ; if only I were sure— (looking at him)

COMTE. You were exempt from obedience ?

COM. (casting her eyes down) In some things.

COMTE. In everything. Be reassured, madame. I may entreat—I may even implore ; but command, never ! *(bows)*

COM. Really, monsieur ! then, after all, marriage is not so very terrible.

COMTE. There are all sorts of marriages. *(taking out his snuff-box)* There are outlandish places, I believe, even to this day, where people marry for what they call love, and break their hearts over inconstancy. They follow their inclinations, and marry. In Paris, we marry and follow our inclinations. *(takes snuff)*

COM. Really ? They didn't tell me that at the convent.

COMTE. There are some things they don't tell you, *(takes snuff)* even at a convent. *(draws back and motions her to sit on sofa)* But won't you be seated ? or are you in haste ?

COM. Oh, not in the least. Now that I'm not afraid of you, I'll stay as long as ever you like. *(crosses L. front of COMTE and sits on sofa L.)*

COMTE. *(aside)* Jasmin was right. She isn't half bad looking.

COM. Do you know, you interest me very much indeed ? Then, marriage, instead of being irksome, is a convenience ?

COMTE. *(standing at R. end of sofa)* Ours is a marriage of convenience, pure and simple. It was arranged by our parents ; and our uncle, the General, has been deputed to see that their last wishes were carried out. You were at the convent ; I was at Versailles. I haven't seen you since you were a child. What was the use of seeing you ? If I hadn't liked you, it would have been very unpleasant, and I should only have anticipated misfortune. If I had liked you—well, there was no occasion for haste. We have our lives before us.

COM. But I am afraid you will never like me, M. le comte.

COMTE. You are much afraid that I shall.

COM. What makes you think that ?

COMTE. *(pointing to door R.)* Doors don't lock themselves. Besides, why shouldn't I like you ?

COM. I have so many faults.

COMTE. And do you suppose that I am perfect, comtesse ?

COM. Oh, I dare say you have some little faults ; but mine are inexcusable.

COMTE. Let me be the judge of that. Suppose we begin with the greatest. (*moves away from her a step to C.*)

COM. Hadn't we better begin with the least ?

COMTE. The least, then.

COM. I am inquisitive to a degree.

COMTE. In other words, you are a woman.

COM. And I insist upon having my own way.

COMTE. As long as I am permitted to go mine, I shall place no obstacle in your ladyship's.

COM. I cannot endure contradiction.

COMTE. You shall never be contradicted.

COM. Then, I am not good-tempered.

COMTE. Your voice belies your words.

COM. (*laughs*) Ask Marton.

COMTE. If I were so ill-bred as to cross-examine your ladyship's servants, I trust they are sufficiently well-bred to deceive me.

COM. (*still laughing*) You don't know what a life I lead her.

COMTE. I am only concerned with the life your ladyship leads me. And if these are your only imperfections, it will be a pleasure to condone them. (*bows*)

COM. (*hesitates*) Yes. But there is something else. I left it till the last. (*rising*)

COMTE. This is interesting.

COM. Do you insist upon my telling you ?

COMTE. I have said I shall never insist.

COM. But you entreat ?

COMTE. I entreat.

COM. Oh ! I dare not ! (*crossing R. C.*)

COMTE. Comtesse, I implore. (*he falls on one knee, C.*)

COM. But it's impossible.

COMTE. I can only implore you ; (*rising*) and if your ladyship waits for further pressure, you will deprive yourself of the pleasure of telling me something you are as anxious to say as I am to hear. (*he puts her into chair R. of table R. and seats himself L. of table*)

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COM. (*with an effort*) Well, then, (*catches the Comte's eye*)—oh, I can't!

COMTE. (*taking her hand*) Courage!

COM. (*in a meek voice*) At the convent—

COMTE. At the convent?

COM. I had a playmate.

COMTE. Well, no harm in that.

COM. No, but she had a brother.

COMTE. That was not your fault.

COM. But he used to come and see her at the convent.

COMTE. All good brothers do.

COM. Perhaps you don't know what an excitement a brother creates in a convent.

COMTE. I can imagine it. I have always regretted that I never had a sister—at a convent.

COM. And I've told you how curious I am.

COMTE. You naturally wanted to see what he was like.

COM. Yes; and one day, to gratify my curiosity, my friend took me with her into the parlor.

COMTE. No great harm done yet.

COM. No; but I haven't finished. After that first day, she *always* took me with her into the parlor.

COMTE. At least you went with her.

COM. He was a very affectionate brother, and he used to come and see his sister once a week.

COMTE. At least, he *came* once a week.

COM. Yes; then he came twice a week, then he came three times, then he came every day.

COMTE. To see his sister.

COM. But I was always there.

COMTE. So was the sister?

COM. But that made it worse.

COMTE. How?

COM. (*uneasily playing with the buttons of her gloves*) A brother has no secrets from his sister. Naturally, he told his sister that he was in love with me. And naturally, I—well, there are no secrets in a convent—naturally, I had already told her that I was in love with the chevalier.

COMTE. A chevalier!

COM. And naturally, she told her brother what I had told her, and me what her brother had told her.

So that, somehow, without a word being said, we became engaged. Can you ever forgive me?

COMTE. (*rising*) Comtesse, I am the proudest husband in the world. (*COMTESSE rises*) I have married a woman who has broken her word only once. I am presuming there was only one brother? (*COM. casts him a reproachful glance; he bows, apologetically*) At the same time if our union should be blessed (*takes her hand*) with a daughter—(*COMTESSE withdraws her hand*) I think we will keep her at home. (*goes down L.; turns to her*) But how does the matter stand with regard to the chevalier?

COM. I know my duty, M. le comte, and if it breaks my heart I will never see him again.

COMTE (*coming to c.*) But why should you break your heart? I implore you to do nothing so inhuman. See the position you would put me in. This man would go about everywhere, saying I was jealous—I, the Comte de Candale, jealous—he would make me ridiculous. Besides, what folly to vow not to see a man whom you might meet in church, at the opera, in the ball-room. It's idle to make promises one cannot possibly keep. No, comtesse, I prefer to rely on your own good sense and taste, and on the respect for the name which you have consented to share with me. (*bows*) Neither seek nor avoid the chevalier, and if you happen to meet, treat him as you would treat any one who had not a sister at the convent. (*takes snuff*)

COM. Oh, monsieur le comte! How good you are! What stories they have told me about husbands! They paralyzed me with terror. But you are delightful. (*takes his hand*)

COMTE. Then, I leave you a little reassured? (*backing a step L.*)

COM. You are leaving me?

COMTE. Do you wish me to stay?

COM. (*retreating*) Oh, no!

COMTE. Unfortunately, I have an engagement. (*going L.*)

COM. An engagement?

COMTE. A mere dinner party. I can send an excuse;

COM. Not for the world! (*COMTE moves L. a step*) But may I ask— (*COMTESSE comes L. c. to him*)

COMTE. (*drawing back*)

COM. Who gives the dinner party ?

COMTE. A certain marquise, whom I happen to know.

COM. A marquise ? But who is this marquise ?

COMTE. A mere acquaintance.

COM. Is she young ?

COMTE. (*considering*) Five-and-twenty.

COM. Married, of course ?

COMTE. A widow. (*bows and goes L.*)

COM. (*piqued*) A widow !

COMTE. (*speaking off L.*) Jasmin ! (*Re-enter JASMIN, L., with cloak, gloves, etc.; re-enter MARTON, R. JASMIN helps COMTE with his cloak*) Is the coupe there ?

JASMIN. At your private door, M. le comte.

MARTON. (R.; *aside to COMTESSE*) The chevalier is under your window.

COM. (*pushing MARTON away*) M. le comte ! (*advancing*)

MARTON. (*following her to c.; aside*) Hadn't you better get the concert over ?

COM. (*same business*) M. le comte !

COMTE. (*turning*) Madame la comtesse ? (MARTON *goes and stands at door R.*, JASMIN *at door L.*)

COM. What is the name of the marquise ?

COMTE. (*front of sofa L. c., bowing*) I did not ask madame of the chevalier.

COM. (*flinches, draws herself up, curtseys, smiles sweetly*) Good-night. (*Exit quickly R., followed by MARTON*).

JASMIN. M. le comte is going then ?

COMTE. (L. C.) Certainly. (*goes to table R. for his gloves. A brilliant flourish on the harpsichord, off R.*) What's that ?

JASMIN. Madame la comtesse, on the harpsichord.

COMTE. (*listens*) Tell Lapierre I won't be a moment. (*Exit JASMIN, L. COMTESSE sings, COMTE slowly moves up L. C., listening, putting on his gloves; at the end of the verse smiles; takes np his hat*) My wife has a voice. (*Exit L., putting his hat on as the curtain falls*)

END OF ACT I.

ACT II.

LIGHTING.

Float and battens full up.

Shelf (B. side). One salmon, one amber lime.

Shelf (O. P. side). One salmon, one amber lime.

Two blue limes, through window L.

Sconces and chandelier alight.

Two blue lime boxes on back cloth.

Lengths in doors, before back cloth and in window.

The fire is out.

HAND PROPS.

Letters for JASMIN.

Smelling salts for MARTON.

Domino and mask for JASMIN.

(The c. doors are open. Opening music.)

SCENE.—*Same. Next evening.*

*Enter, c., the COMTE and the CHEVALIER, arm in arm,
Their hats are on. Laughing and chatting.*

COMTE. (R. of him) Only to think I should meet you in this way ! My dear old Valclos, where have you been hiding ? I thought you were dead, and nearly went in mourning !

VAL. A soldier must go, where he is ordered ; and I've been ordered over half France. However, at last, I have six months' leave of absence, and naturally made straight for Paris.

COMTE. (music stops) How long have you been here ?

VAL. Only three days or so.

COMTE. Three days ! and you haven't been to see me ; and if I hadn't tumbled over you just outside, you would have left me in that horrible suspense. (puts him on sofa L., takes his hat, and puts both hats on cabinet up L.)

VAL. I happened to know you had other things to think of.

COMTE. You mean my wife ? Then you've heard of my marriage ?

VAL. Paris is talking of nothing else.

COMTE. (*coming down c.*) Yes, I am married, Chevalier. I put it off as long as I could ; but ultimately, I accepted the inevitable. (*sits l. of table r.*)

VAL. (*a pause*) And are you happy ?

COMTE. My dear Valclos, a marriage of convenience, neither more nor less. Bushels of diamonds, boxes of family plate, a princely portion, and six hundred thousand settled by my uncle on the eldest son. (*yawns*) What could a man want more ?

VAL. Your uncle, the old General, you mean ?

COMTE. He arranged it all ; and he was going to give the bride away ; but at the last moment that old wound of his proved troublesome and I thought of you. But presuming you were dead I dried my tears and married in your absence. And you were in Paris all the time—and you hid yourself ?—why ?

VAL. (*shifting about uneasily*) Oh ! I didn't think you wanted me.

COMTE. Of course to give the bride away ! However, never mind ! I've found you at last ; and I must introduce you to my wife.

VAL. (*very uncomfortable*) Oh, ye-s, yes. Who is it you have married ?

COMTE. My cousin, Mlle. de Torigny.

VAL. (*affecting ignorance*) Torigny ? Torigny ? I seem to know the name.

COMTE. Of course you do ; you must remember her father, the Marshal—

VAL. Oh, of course, yes, yes.

COMTE. And her old aunt—

VAL. Oh yes, that old aunt.

COMTE. Whose heir she is, who brought her up—oh, at some convent—I forget the name—at the Ursulines, the Carmelites, or somewhere.

VAL. At Soissons ?

COMTE. Soissons—that's the place ! (*turning his head quickly*) Now, how the deuce did you know that, Chevalier ?

VAL. I happen to have a sister there.

COMTE. Oh, ho ! You have a sister—

VAL. (*pettishly*) Well, you know I have a sister.

COMTE. At the same convent? (*moving a step to him*)

VAL. Ye-s. And when I was stationed at Laon—only eight miles off—

COMTE. Naturally, you went to see your sister?

VAL. I was always a good brother.

COMTE. Ha, ha, ha. The best 'n the world.

VAL. I went once a week.

COMTE. Twice! Ha, ha, ha.

VAL. Three times!

COMTE. Every day! (*laughs; they both laugh together*)

VAL. Well, what could be more natural? (*laughing and rising*)

COMTE. Nothing. It was inevitable. (*laughs*)

VAL. And, it's just on the cards, I may have met your wife there.

COMTE. (*rising*) I shouldn't wonder. Well, let me present you. If you don't know her, you will make her acquaintance; and if you know her already, you will renew it. (*goes to door R.*)

VAL. I shall be charmed.

COMTE. (*knocks and pushes door open; aside*) Not locked! That's a point gained! (*aloud*) Sit down, Chevalier; make yourself at home. (*exit R.*)

VAL. (*fanning himself with his handkerchief*) Poor Candale! If he only knew— (*sits*)

Enter MARTON, c., holding a bottle of smelling salts.

MAR. (*gives a little scream*) Here you are again? (*stopping short*)

VAL. (*jumps up*) Where should I be, if not near madame la comtesse? Oh, Marton, what a lovely voice she has! and what a mastery of the harpsichord!

MAR. (*laughs and comes down c.*) Is it you, M. le chevalier? Yesterday, a tiger—"Oh, I shall kill him!"—to-day, a lamb? Music indeed has charms! So, you enjoyed the concert?

VAL. (*sighing*) I never knew I was so musical.

MAR. (c.) And does madame la comtesse know you're here?

VAL. I had no means of communication.

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MAR. If she should lose her presence of mind, on seeing you ! If she should start—or scream !

VAL. (*going to her*) I have anticipated everything. (*chuckling*) I have told M. le comte that I had a sister in the same convent, so, what more natural than that she should recognize me ?

MAR. Ah ! that was prudent, M. le chevalier ; but be careful ! (*shaking her finger at him*) M. le comte is no fool.

VAL. But we will make him one—eh, Marton ? (*puts his arm slyly round her waist*)

MAR. Don't make one of yourself. They're coming ! (*they separate* MARTON goes up R. C. to back of table R. VALCLOS gets L.)

Re-enter COMTE, followed by COMTESSE, R., with fan.

COMTE. (*coming to c.*) Comtesse, allow me to present you to my oldest and best friend—M. le Chevalier de Valclos.

VAL. (L.) Madame la comtesse ! (*bows*)

COM. (R.) Monsieur le chevalier ! (*curtseys*)

COMTE. (C.) Well, do you recognize my wife ?

VAL. No, I've not had the pleasure of seeing madame la comtesse before. (*crossing to her front of COMTE, who moves a little L.*) But I hope often to have the pleasure of seeing her again. (*they bow and curtsey again*)

COM. So great a friend of M. le comte will always be a welcome visitor. (*bows and sits R. of table R.* MARTON goes to COMTESSE, hands her smelling bottle. *The COMTESSE sniffs at it, hands it back to MARTON, who exits R.*)

Enter JASMIN, L.

COMTE. (*aside to VAL.*) Not badly put for a schoolgirl, eh, chevalier ? (*to JASMIN, who draws him aside*) What do you want now ? Cannot one have a moment ?

JAS. A letter for monsieur (*giving him the letter.* MARTON exits R.)

COMTE. (*turning to the COMTESSE*) Comtesse, a letter—will you excuse me ? (*bow*) Chevalier ? (*mo-*

tions him to sit on settee L. CHEVALIER DE VALCLOS sits)

JAS. (*aside to COMTE*) From the marquise. Her footman is waiting for an answer.

COMTE. I've a few lines to write ; but I leave you in excellent company. (*exit, followed by JASMIN, L.* *As they go out VALCLOS half rises and is about to go over to the COMTESSE, when JASMIN bangs the doors L. in closing them. VALCLOS sits again quickly with a terrified look at door L.*)

VAL. (*looks again at door, then rising and approaching COMTESSE*) Louise ! (*drops on one knee at her feet*)

COM. My name is Madame de Candale. (*rising and crossing to L. C.*)

VAL. (*rising*) Since when ?

COM. (*sits on settee L.*) Since I was married.

VAL. (*rises and moves to L. C.*) Since the concert ? (*smiling*) No, Louise ! I am the husband of your heart. (*sits by her*) M. le Comte de Candale—

COM. Is your best friend.

VAL. When he is here ; but in his absence, may I not take a best friend's privilege ? (*seizes her hand*)

COM. (*rising and moving away to R. C.*) M. de Valclos, I have kept my promise—

VAL. Ah, how can I thank you ?

COM. If you feel gratitude, show it by leaving me. You must see what confusion I am in !

VAL. (*rising*) But I've not seen you since yesterday ; and I've so much to thank you for.

COM. Too much gratitude is tedious ; and if you persist in thanking me, I shall begin to regret that I have given you occasion.

VAL. (C.) (*reproachfully*) Louise !

COM. (R. C.) Madame la comtesse.

VAL. Have I done anything to offend you ?

COM. Yesterday, you said good-bye to me forever, yet here you are again, just as if nothing had happened. (*goes up C. a step*)

VAL. Well, it was your husband who insisted on presenting me. It wasn't my fault that I met him. He was the last man in the world I wanted to see. I was standing quietly underneath your window—

COM. (c.) M. le chevalier, do you propose to pass the remainder of your life under my window?

VAL. (L. C., fervently) Only the evenings, and each evening you will play to me?

COM. Preposterous! How can you expect such a thing?

VAL. (on his dignity) I not only expect it, madame, I *demand* it!

COM. (mocking) You — you demand? (strolls down R., fanning herself)

VAL. I have a right! (moves up a little)

COM. To entreat, to implore —

VAL. No, madame, to *demand*! (coming down)

COM. But you are becoming a tyrant — how different from M. le comte. (goes to C.)

VAL. Of course, there is a difference. He is only your husband. You don't belong to him. (goes L.)

COM. If I don't belong to him, at least, monsieur, I am no longer my own mistress.

VAL. (going to her) No, Louise, for you belong to me! (seizes her round the waist and is about to kiss her)

COM. How dare you? (her handkerchief is dropped down C. in the confusion. The COMTE is heard giving orders to JASMIN off. Each rush back to their places at the COMTE'S entrance. COMTESSE, R. of table R.; VAL. on settee)

Re-enter COMTE, C.

COMTE. Well, comtesse, have you entertained one another?

COM. (fanning) M. le chevalier hasn't opened his mouth.

COMTE. (coming down L. C.) What! *Tête-à-tête* with a pretty woman, and not a word to say for yourself? That's not like you, chevalier.

VAL. Madame la comtesse seemed to be preoccupied. She hasn't moved a muscle.

COMTE. (the COMTE sees the handkerchief, stoops, picks it up, and examines the crest. As he stoops, the COMTESSE and VALCLOS half rise, terrified, and sink back again as the COMTE examines the crest) I must apologize for the chevalier. Usually, he is in the highest of spirits, but to-day he is a little out of sorts. (hands COMTESSE the handkerchief, bows and goes R. C.)

COM. (*to VAL.*) You are not well, monsieur?

VAL. On the contrary, madame, I never felt better in my life.

COMTE. Come, Valclos, no mysteries with the comtesse! (*to the COMTESSE*) You must know, he's in love.

COM. You are in love, monsieur?

COMTE. (c.) Over head and ears!

VAL. (*turning to him*) What are you driving at, Candale?

COMTE. (*stands left of table R.*) If he won't tell you all about it, I am not so modest. First of all, you must understand, de Valclos has a sister.

COM. (*uneasily*) M. de Valclos has a sister?

COMTE. In a convent. And the chevalier, being the best of brothers, often went to see her, in this convent—(*looks at VALCLOS*) very often. Now, it so happened, that his sister had a friend. Mademoiselle—Mademoiselle—what was her name, chevalier?

VAL. (*turns away, affecting ignorance, and speaks in an injured tone of voice*) I haven't the least idea what you're talking about.

COMTE. (*sits L. of table R.*) Well, the name doesn't matter. The upshot of it was, that the chevalier, who is highly inflammable, fell desperately in love with this young lady.

VAL. (*rising uncomfortably*) I assure you, madame la comtesse, there isn't a word of truth in all this rigmarole. Candale is making it up as he goes on.

COMTE. Wait till I've finished. (*VAL. sits again*)

VAL. (*frightened*) Oh, is there any more?

COMTE. Oh, the best part's to come. To make a long story short, one unlucky day, the chevalier discovered that his *inamorata* was engaged—was, indeed, on the point of leaving the convent to be married. (*Com. rises; sweetly and gently smiling*) Don't rise, comtesse. I haven't finished yet.

COM. (*in great distress*) I'm listening.

COMTE. Imagine the situation! Consternation in the convent—tears by the bucketful—one last embrace—two last embraces—vows of eternal agony—visions of suicide—(*turns to COMTESSE apologetically*) a nice, clean suicide—a third last embrace. But

everything has to come to an end—even last embraces. They were wrenched apart, and the young lady married. Now, can you wonder at the chevalier's silence? Look at him. Is he not a legitimate object of sympathy? But you're not looking, comtesse?

COM. (*turning her head towards VALCLOS*) I sympathize with monsieur.

COMTE. But to proceed. The chevalier is a man of spirit. He doesn't look it at the present moment, but he's a little out of sorts.

VAL. (*losing his temper*) Oh, come to the point.

COMTE. That's where I'm coming, Valclos. Broken as he was in heart, he didn't lose his head, and by good luck—the only bit of good luck in the story—the husband happened to be his oldest friend, and the evening after the marriage, finding de Valclos under his wife's window, asked him in. Here the chevalier saw his opportunity. Pretending that he'd never met the wife, or only casually, he thought he'd throw the husband off the scent, and so be allowed the run of the establishment. Judge of his consternation when he discovered that the husband knew all about it.

COM. And the sequel? (*face to audience*)

COMTE. Ah! that's to come.

COM. (*uneasily*) What did the husband do?

COMTE. (*rising and moving c.*) What did the husband do? Well, luckily, the husband was a man of the world, and instead of treating the matter seriously chose to be amused. (*VALCLOS' face brightens*) He made no ridiculous scene—he delivered no moral lectures, which might perhaps have sounded oddly, under all the circumstances—but having made them both feel, I am afraid, a little uncomfortable, (*looks at VAL.*) and one of them look, I am sure, supremely foolish (*VALCLOS writhes*), and having given them both clearly to understand that he has all his wits about him, and perfectly grasps the situation—(*moves to table up L. to get his hat*)—well, having an appointment to keep, he simply took his hat, and left them to their devices. (*bowing*) That's what the husband did. (*exit c. and off R.*)

VAL. (*pause*) Somebody has betrayed us.

COM. Perhaps it is we who have betrayed ourselves. (*goes up c. a few steps*)

VAL. I'd no idea Candale was so observant ; but he is scarcely hospitable. And I, such an old friend !

Com. (*moving up to door c.*) We have deserved this, both of us.

VAL. (*rising and going to back of sofa*) I can't complain. Fortune of war ! But how have *you* deserved it ?

Com. (*going to fireplace*) By conspiring with you to deceive him.

VAL. But we *haven't* deceived him. That's the worst of it.

Com. By my unworthiness of his generosity. (*comes back to c.*)

VAL. Generosity ?

Com. Yes. (*returning to front of table down R.*)

VAL. What has he done that's so generous ?

Com. Ah ! you don't know ! (*comes down c. a step*)

VAL. What don't I know ?

Com. Nothing could exceed his kindness to me, his consideration for me, ever since we have been married. (*goes R. a little*)

VAL. One day.

Com. My husband is a gentleman. (*moves down R.*)

VAL. (*moving L.*) Who is he, to give himself these airs of superiority ? Everybody knows his friendship for the Marquise d'Esparville.

Com. The Marquise d'Esparville !

VAL. Yes, everybody but you.

Com. (*c.*) You are mistaken. (*moving up to c.*) He has told me of this friendship.

VAL. (*L. c.*) Has he ? That's a nice, gentlemanly thing to do ! (*goes L. a little*)

Com. Yesterday. Strange to say, I had forgotten it ; but now it all comes back to me. He dined with her last night.

VAL. (*coming c. and whispering in her ear*) And where has he gone to now ? What's this appointment ? What were those few lines that he had to write ? Who was that letter from ?

Com. Do you imply it was from the marquise ? (*moving away a step R. c.*)

VAL. I imply nothing. (*pointing to door L.*) When the door was open I saw a footman in her livery—cerise and silver.

COM. (R.) M. le chevalier ! you—peeped ?

VAL. (L. C.) (indignantly) I didn't peep—I saw.
(turns his back on her)

COM. (returning to him, c.) M. le chevalier, I want to ask you something. But think before you answer me. Do you know this Marquise d'Esparville ?

VAL. (starting) By reputation.

COM. What is her reputation ? Think before you speak.

VAL. There is no need to think. It's of the worst.

COM. The worst ?

VAL. I mean the smartest ; she's notorious.

COM. Oh ! (moves down R. Opens her fan to hide her face. With an effort) Is she pretty ?

VAL. It's a question of taste. (trying to get out of answering her)

COM. (quickly) There is only one question in the matter. Is she pretty ?

VAL. What men admire, women don't, and vice versa.

COM. (advancing to him, c.) What men admire, women say they don't, and do. There are no two opinions. Is she pretty ? Forget that I'm a woman, and tell me the truth.

VAL. Very well, I will forget that you're a woman.

COM. Oh ! (turns from him and goes R. C.)

VAL. (L. C.) She is considered a beauty.

COM. A beauty ! (going down R. a step)

VAL. (going a step to her) I mean of a certain type—by those who admire that style.

COM. (turning to him) M. le chevalier, it is too late to remember that I am a woman. Dark or fair ?

VAL. Dark.

COM. (standing by chair L. of table R.) Black eyes or brown ?

VAL. (considering) Brown.

COM. (Distraite. Drops into chair L. of table R.) Brown eyes are beautiful.

VAL. (approaching her) I prefer gray.

COM. (distraite) The comte prefers them brown. Witty, of course ?

VAL. Well, slangy—of a certain pertness. And a coquette up to her eyebrows.

COM. A coquette ?

VAL. A flirt of the first water.

COM. And you know this lady only by reputation !

VAL. On my (*swallowing uncomfortably*) word of honor !

COM. And on *my* word of honor, M. le chevalier, (*rising*) it would seem that you know a lady better by reputation than I should by acquaintance.

VAL. (C.) I have only answered your questions. (*moving down L. C.*)

COM. (*coming C. to him*) There are requests which ought to be refused. Monsieur le chevalier—when a lady asks a gentleman to forget that she's a woman, she is suggesting that he should remember it. (*moves up C.*)

VAL. (*turning to her*) Have I offended you again ?

COM. (*at doors up C.*) No, I am not offended—only undeceived. (*opens her fan*) But doesn't it occur to you that your visit is a prolonged one ?

VAL. (*drawing back a step*) I am dismissed ?

COM. I leave it to your own good taste. (*closes her fan*) You know the world better than I do ; and when you think you have stayed long enough, you will require no dismissal. (*goes to fireplace*)

VAL. (*moving up L. and taking his hat from small table, then comes to C. ; plaintively*) May I not call again ?

COM. (*at fireplace*) As often as you please. So far as I am concerned, this house is always open to you. (*moves C. a step*)

VAL. Perhaps I was better off when it was closed.

COM. What do you mean ? (*going a step to him*)

VAL. I mean that we didn't part in this way at the convent.

COM. (up R. C.) I was a girl then.

VAL. (up C.) A few days ago !

COM. Then I was Mademoiselle de Torigny—today, I am Madame la Comtesse de Candale. (*curtsies*)

VAL. Then good-night, Madame de Candale. (*bows and exit C. in great dudgeon*)

COM. (*going to table R. and ringing the bell—calls*) Marton ! (*re-enter MARTON, R.*) Why do you leave me all alone, so long ? (*going L. C.*)

MAR. (*coming down c.*) Alone? I thought M. le chevalier was here.

COM. Well, so he was. In future be good enough not to leave me alone with M. le chevalier. (*goes up c., l. of MARTON*)

MAR. Madame la comtesse! you will be telling me directly to leave you alone with M. le comte!

COM. (*comes down again*) Well, of course, but you never do. You're always *buzzing* about when he is here. (*sits on settee L. c.*)

MAR. (c.) M. le chevalier has displeased madame?

COM. He has been very stupid to-day.

MAR. Poor M. le chevalier!

COM. Why not poor M. le comte? He must have found his marriage very dull!

MAR. Perhaps he has found distraction elsewhere.

COM. (*fanning herself vigorously*) And if he has, whose fault is that?

MAR. Nobody's fault. I am not blaming monsieur. But if it would cheer madame to know a secret— (*moving to back of sofa*)

COM. (*rising*) But it wouldn't cheer me. Be good enough to hold your tongue. (*crossing over R. c.*)

MAR. (*annoyed*) M. le chevalier has upset madame. (*goes to table at end of sofa and puts the things straight*)

COM. (*coming to c.*) Oh! I've no patience with a man who's always sighing, clasping his hands, and gazing in your eyes, saying, he loves you, and that you belong to him, and giving himself airs as if you did. One can't keep on saying: "I love you." It grows tedious. When one wants to say it, it's all very well: but when you've said it, you *don't* want to say it; and you must say it till you do. Besides, I don't belong to him. (*goes down R.*)

MAR. It was different at the convent.

COM. (*comes R. c. and sits L. of table R.*) But I'm not at the convent; and I don't think brothers should be allowed in the convents. (*bangs her fan on to the table*) Talk about something else. (*with a sudden thought*) Tell me—but there! Of course, you won't know anything about it.

MAR. I know a good deal, madame.

COM. Do you know what a flirt is?

MAR. (*laughs*) Madame la comtesse ! It is the A. B. C. of my profession.

COM. (*leaning forward eagerly in her chair*) Well, what is flirtation ?

MAR. (*coming c. to her*) Flirtation, madame, is the art of making a man fall in love with you, and of getting rid of him when you have had enough of him.

COM. And what has one to do to be a flirt ?

MAR. Most ladies have to do nothing. It's an instinct.

COM. But if one hasn't that instinct ?

MAR. Ah ! I never served a lady of that sort.

COM. Can't it be learnt—like languages ?

MAR. It has a language of its own—two. It speaks both with its eyes and with its lips ; and the great thing is, that they must never say the same thing. If the eyes say yes, the lips must say no. And if the lips say yes, the eyes must contradict them !

COM. That seems simple enough. But which of them speaks the truth ?

MAR. Neither ? The truth is against all the rules. Then, you must never say the same thing twice, or be of the same mind two days together. What you like to-day, you must detest to-morrow.

COM. But in your *heart* ?

MAR. (*going L. c. a step*) Oh ! hearts have nothing to do with it. You talk about your heart—your chest serves every purpose.

COM. Is that all ?

MAR. (*coming c. again*) Gracious, no ! You must be as capricious as the weather. You must rain one moment, and be sunshine the next. Never keep an appointment—well, of course, no lady who respects herself ever does, insist on having everything you don't want—and wouldn't know what to do with, if you had it. For instance, the other day at our door (*pointing L.*)—I mean M. le comte's private door—I saw the daintiest little chariot possible. Four cream-colored horses and two outriders, in liveries of cerise and silver.

COM. (*starting*) Cerise and silver ?

MAR. Any one could see at a glance that carriage

was a whim. For who, outside a circus, wants such a thing ?

COM. (*rising determinedly*) *I do!* I want a chariot, with four cream-colored horses, and two outriders in cerise and silver ! (*crossing L. C.*)

MAR. Ha ! ha ! ha !

COM. And what is more, Marton, I will have them.

MAR. (*running down L. to her*) Then, another thing !

COM. Yes ?

MAR. Most important. With any one you care for, you assume an air of supreme indifference--

COM. Yes.

MAR. And if there's a convenient third person, affect a distinct liking for his company.

COM. That isn't always a success, though. (*crossing to R. C. front of MARTON*)

MAR. (*considering—then with a sudden thought*) Then try jealousy !

COM. Yes !

MAR. (*going to her*) Could madame la comtesse be jealous ?

COM. Yes.

MAR. But naturally ?

COM. (*viciously*) Naturally ! yes ! (*seizes her hands roughly*)

MAR. Ha ! ha ! ha ! (*drawing away*) Then, I think, that's enough for the first lesson. (*curtseys*)

Re-enter JASMIN, L., with a mask and domino ; he is holding the domino out with both hands at arms' length ; in so doing he does not see the COMTESSE. He moves as if to cross stage quickly ; when he goes to c. the COMTESSE stops him.

COM.	MAR.	JAS.
O	O	O

COM. What have you there, Jasmin ?

JAS. (*he starts, throws domino over his arm and draws back as if to go*) Excuse me, madame la comtesse ; I didn't know you were here. (*MARTON in the meantime stands in front of door L. MARTON takes the domino from him and gets round to c.*)

COM. But what is that? (*takes the domino from MARTON*)

MAR. That is a domino, madame.

JAS. (*nudging MARTON; aside*) For the marquise. (*she takes mask from him*)

COM. And that? (*pointing to the mask*)

MAR. That is a mask. (*hands it to the COMTESSE and returns to JASMIN*)

JAS. (*nudging MARTON; aside*) For the marquise!

COM. (*examining them*) You can go, Jasmin.

JAS. (*hesitating*) But——

COM. You can go, Jasmin. (*JASMIN exchanges remonstrative glances with MARTON and MARTON bundles him out L.; still examining the things*) What do you do with them?

MAR. You put them on.

COM. (*delighted*) Put them on for me, Marton. (*MARTON puts the domino on COMTESSE*) And this, so! (*puts mask in COMTESSE's left hand and shows her how to hold it before her eyes. She looks at COMTESSE and bursts out laughing, then goes up L.*)

MAR. I'll fetch the mirror. (*she gets it from off console table L. C. The COM. gets up C. and turns round and round admiring herself in the glass which MARTON holds out*)

COM. But what are they for?

MAR. For the masked ball to-morrow. (*puts glass back on console table*)

COM. Where is the ball?

MAR. At the opera. M. le comte is evidently going.

COM. (*lifting the domino a little*) But does he wear these?

MAR. Perhaps he intends to take your ladyship.

COM. (*dancing down R.*) Oh, I should like it. I should like it, Marton! (*coming C. again*) But what do you do, when you have these things on?

MAR. Oh, dance, and talk, and flirt. (*getting to C., L. of COMTESSE*)

COM. With *any one*?

MAR. (C.) That's as it pleases you.

COM. (R. C.) Marton, suppose that we are at the ball—you are M. le comte, and I am—any one. (*holds the mask over her face*) What would he say to me? (*the music starts (a minuet). The COMTESSE coquet-*

tishly moves slowly down R. in time with it ; MARTON (acting) kisses her hand, places it on her heart, removes an imaginary hat)

MAR. "Madame !"

COM. (*timidly*) "Monsieur !" (MARTON touches the COM. on the shoulder; COM. starts coquettishly and runs round R. table to c.)

MAR. (*following her round*) "Madame ! Such beauty—form, if the form is index to the face, beautiful you are—should not be shrouded. Masks are for the plain. May I not—" (*attempts to remove mask*)

COM. (*takes mask from her face and asks suddenly*) What do I do ?

MAR. (*quickly*) You don't let him. At least, not just at first.

COM. (*running down L.*) Oh, this is fun !

MAR. "Do not be cruel ! Let the sun shine forth, and warm me with its rays ! Madame ! (*drops on one knee*)

Re-enter COMTE, c.; he stands up c., unseen by the others.

COM. "Who has a better right to gaze upon the sun than you, monsieur le comte, (*marked movement of COMTE*) whose voice has power to make it shine ?" (*unmasks*)

COMTE. (*up stage*) Brava ! brava ! brava ! (COMTESSE stands for a moment petrified, then rushes across stage and off R.)

MAR. (*on her knees, terrified; shrieks*) Monsieur le comte ! (*follows the COMTESSE quickly, bangs door R. as curtain falls. The COMTE stands c., laughing*)

NOTE.—COMTE must be on to the second, and must clearly indicate by expression that he understands the COMTESSE is alluding to him. The success of the end of the act depends on this.

ACT III.

LIGHTING.

Same as Act I.

PROPS.

Bank-note of 1,000 louis for COMTESSE.

Feather broom for MARTON.

Some of the bouquets are taken off stage.

Petition for GENERAL.

Hand bell ready off L., hand bell ready off R.

(The key of c. door is on the inside. The COMTE'S hat is on table up L. Opening music. Stops as curtain rises.)

SCENE.—*Same. Next morning.*

GENERAL. *(knocks off c.)* What, no one up ?
(MARTON and JASMIN simultaneously thrust their heads through doors R. and L. respectively. Knocks c.)
 Hullo there !

Enter MARTON, R., and JASMIN, L., putting his coat on.

BOTH. The General ! *(running up to c. doors and unlocking them)*

JAS. Our uncle is a very early riser. *(saunters up yawning to L. of door c. They open door c. The GENERAL is standing in doorway)*

JAS. { Can it be !

MAR. { Is it possible !

JAS. (L.) You, General !

GEN. (c.) Did you imagine I was dead ? Don't be in such a hurry.

MAR. But your wound ?

GEN. I'm better ; *(MARTON comes down c.)* and the first use I made of my legs was to come to Paris to embrace my niece. Where is she ? *(coming down c., followed L. by JASMIN)*

JAS. Everybody doesn't rise as early as you, General.

GEN. Not up ? (pause) Well, don't disturb her.

MAR. Poor madame la comtesse ! (JASMIN comes round table L. to L. C.)

GEN. (looks from her to JASMIN) Why, what's the matter ? (JASMIN throws up his hands) What does he mean ? (MARTON casts up her eyes) Speak, woman !

MAR. (R. C.) It was your doing, this marriage.

GEN. (C.) And I'm proud of it.

JAS. (L. C.) There isn't much to be proud of.

GEN. Monsieur Jasmin, in my day, it was the custom for valets to be respectful to their superiors ; and if they forgot themselves they were speedily reminded. Remember, (taps his boot with his stick) my foot is well again. (MARTON gasps)

JAS. (aside) Our uncle is as provincial as ever. (moving L. a little)

GEN. And what are *you* gasping about, Marton ?

MAR. What about, indeed !

GEN. What is the mystery ? (a ring off L.)

JAS. M. le comte ! (bows) Excuse me. (moves to door L. A ring off R.)

MAR. (imitates JASMIN bowing) Madame la comtesse ! Excuse me. (goes to door R.)

GEN. (looking L.) M. le comte ? (looking R.) Madame la comtesse ?

MAR. (at door R.) That's the mystery. (exit R. JASMIN exits L. The GENERAL stands c., petrified)

Enter COMTE, L.; he goes to GENERAL, shaking both the GENERAL'S hands.

COMTE. Ah, my dear uncle ! This is a pleasant surprise ! (GENERAL shakes hands)

GEN. You're not the only person who's surprised.

COMTE. Of course ! (takes GENERAL's hat, goes up L. and puts it on table) You've never seen this house before. Well, how do you like it ? I found the old one was too small for me. Here there is plenty of accommodation.

GEN. So it seems. (crosses to sofa)

COMTE. (coming down L. of settee) Well, what's the news ?

GEN. That is for you to tell me.

COMTE. Nothing has happened lately.

GEN. Haven't you been married?

COMTE. (*sitting on left side of sofa; the GENERAL sits R. of him*) To be sure! How can I thank you, General? You have given me a most excellent wife. I find my cousin so quiet and unobtrusive that I sometimes forget she's in the house.

GEN. Quiet? Unobtrusive? Those her only good qualities? Those are the virtues of a valet, Candale—though, I observe, your man lacks both of them. My niece is the most charming woman in the world, and if you haven't discovered that for yourself it's time you did.

COMTE. I have discovered it, uncle. Charming as you please; but you must admit a little impracticable.

GEN. I admit nothing of the sort.

COMTE. What do you think she's set her heart upon?

GEN. (*poking him with his stick*) Why, upon you, you vagabond!

COMTE. Four cream-colored horses, and two outriders in cerise and silver.

GEN. And if she has? What is impracticable? Can't you afford to gratify her whim?

COMTE. But, my dear uncle, cream-color—cerise and silver.

GEN. Yes, it sounds a little startling, certainly, but a young bride, fresh from a convent—you must make allowance.

COMTE. But those are the colors of the marquise.

GEN. The marquise?

COMTE. (*rising and crossing R.*) Let her ask me for eight skewbalds and a brace of negroes, and I'll search all the hippodromes in Europe: but the marquise's colors—it is impossible.

GEN. But who is this marquise?

COMTE. The Marquise d'Esparville.

GEN. D'Esparville? Surely, I've read something about some such lady?

COMTE. She is the rage of Paris; and her reputation may have penetrated even the provinces. (*sits L. of table R.*)

GEN. No, Candale; not her reputation; only the report of its loss.

COMTE. But, my dear uncle, what loses a woman's reputation in your native wilds, is precisely what makes it in Paris. The scandals with which the marquise has been associated were of the highest class. Why, she is the best dressed woman of my acquaintance.

GEN. (*astounded*) Of your acquaintance ?

COMTE. I have never seen her in the same costume twice. Indeed, I may say, without fear of contradiction, no lady dresses so often and so little.

GEN. (*astonished, rises*) Then you know this marquise ?

COMTE. It was I who presented her with the team.

GEN. Which you refuse to your own wife !

COMTE. Wives must be reasonable.

GEN. Unless they are the wives of some one else.

COMTE. (*slowly rising*) No, my dear uncle, it isn't as bad as that. The marquise is not a wife. She's been divorced. (*goes to c.*)

GEN. Divorced, eh ?

COMTE. Nobody could be divorced more completely ; and one of her three husbands (*the GENERAL gasps astounded*) having died, she is a widow.

GEN. Divorced three times ! yet you are fool enough—shame, Candale !

COMTE. Shame ?

GEN. Suppose your wife heard of this precious acquaintance ?

COMTE. But she knows all about it.

GEN. (L. c.) Knows all about it !

COMTE. (c.) Certainly !

GEN. How long has she known all about it ?

COMTE. Let me see. How long have we been married ? This is the third day. She has known all about it for three days.

GEN. Who was it told her ?

COMTE. I told her myself.

GEN. (*stares at him, speechless.*) You !

COMTE. Of course.

GEN. (*going L. a little*) And heaven endures this generation ! (*turning to him*) What did she say ?

COMTE. Nothing.

GEN. Poor child !

COMTE, She was quite reasonable on that point.

GEN. Ah, now I understand ! (*looks L.*) M. le comte ! (*looks R.*) Madame la comtesse ! And she has all my sympathy ! And to so sweet a nature, you can refuse a paltry equipage—a toy—a trifle !

COMTE. I haven't refused it. But I'm in this difficulty. I have two ladies to consider ; and it would be equally painful to offend either.

GEN. As long as there are two ladies, that difficulty will be eternal. But the solution is simple.

COMTE. (*moving to him and putting his hands on his shoulders*) My dear uncle, directly you were announced, I said to myself, here is the solution.

GEN. Let there be only one lady.

COMTE. But whilst there are two—

GEN. (*crossing R. C., front of COMTE*) So long, don't count on me.

COMTE. You won't come to my rescue ?

GEN. In everything that's honest I am your uncle ; in all else I am a stranger.

Enter a FOOTMAN, C., from R.

COMTE. Well, luckily, I have a friend—

FOOT. M. le Chevalier de Valclos.

COMTE. And here he is ! (*moves up R. C. ; enter the CHEVALIER, C., from R. ; he stands up C.*) Welcome, chevalier !

VAL. (L. C.) Oh, dear, you are at home. (*FOOTMAN exits C.*)

COMTE. (R. C.) And my wife also. (*VAL. comes down to L., smiling*) Well, are you better ? I haven't seen you since—

VAL. Not since. (*turning his head away*)

COMTE. Uncle, the Chevalier de Valclos, one of those friends who reconcile us—well, even to friendship. Chevalier, my uncle, the General.

VAL. I am proud, indeed.

GEN. (R. C.) Valclos ?—de Valclos ? But I used to know a de Valclos in Cyprus.

VAL. (L. C.) My father. I have heard him speak of you.

GEN. (*moving a step to him*) I congratulate you on your father, M. le chevalier. He has left you an illustrious name and a noble example. Follow it and your future is assured. (*they bow to each other*)

COMTE. (c.) He's going to follow it—by and by. Just at present he's on his own account.

GEN. On his own account ?

COMTE. (*moving to VAL.*) You can't think how pleased I am to see you, chevalier. You are the very person to do me a service.

VAL. I'm sure I shall be only too happy.

COMTE. (*putting his hands on his shoulders*) You must know, Valclos, dear old Valclos ! that my wife —you know my wife ! Oh, uncle, *he* knows my wife ! —has conceived a violent attachment—(*VAL. makes a movement*)—not to you, chevalier ; don't be impatient —but to four cream-colored horses and two outriders.

VAL. Ridiculous !

COMTE. And I rely on you, my dear old fellow, to make her listen to reason.

GEN. How can this possibly concern M. de Valclos ?

COMTE. More than you think, uncle. (*turning to VAL.*) The chevalier has much influence with my wife.

VAL. But this is a very unpleasant sort of a commission. How am I to put it ?

COMTE. Don't ask me. I might just as well do it myself. You understand, I'm to hear nothing more of this menagerie ?

VAL. But see the position you put me in !

COMTE. (c.) I see it perfectly, that's why I put you in it.

VAL. (L. c.) It will appear to madame la comtesse as if *I* were refusing her request.

COMTE. (*going to him a step*) Deuce take it, de Valclos, you must earn your wages.

GEN. His wages ?

COMTE. My dear General, do you suppose such friendship costs one nothing ? Even a de Valclos has his price.

GEN. (R.) Excuse me, gentlemen. But here I am out of my element. You speak a language I don't understand—or rather, one I cannot listen to. Where is my niece ? (COMTE *indicates R.*) Ah ! Madame la comtesse ! One word, M. le chevalier. (VAL. *crosses to R. c. ; COMTE lies on settee L.*) I meet you to-day for the first time, but I knew your father.

VAL. (*giggling*) So you have already said, General.

GEN. (R. C.) And I repeat, your father was a brave and honorable gentleman—he belonged to a school which would seem to be fast disappearing—a school which held friendship sacred, and regarded its betrayal as a crime.

VAL. (*still giggling*) Y—e—s. I—er—I scarcely understand you.

GEN. I say, monsieur, that your father's friends could rely upon loyalty as implicitly as yours appear to count upon its breach. Do you understand me now?

VAL. (*giggling*) No, I can't say I do.

GEN. If not, think over what I have said and its meaning may dawn even on you! (*exit R.*)

VAL. (C. ; *aghast*) I say, Candale, where do you keep him?

COMTE. (*lolling on sofa*) The General lives in the country. He is a little unpolished, but he's been as a father to me, and I put up with him.

VAL. Yes, that's all very well; but you've no business to let a wild animal like that out of its cage, without saying, Look out!

COMTE. You mustn't mind my uncle. He belongs to another generation.

VAL. (C. ; *taking out his snuff-box*) Then the sooner he joins his ancestors the better for his descendants! what with his great wig, and his old-fashioned clothes—call him an uncle?—he's a family portrait! And hang it, he ought never to be allowed out of his frame. (*snuffs*)

COMTE. I can only apologize for him; he knows no better. But he has settled six hundred thousand on my eldest son; and every family portrait doesn't do that.

VAL. (*goes up C. a few steps*) Yes, but you might have dropped me a hint. Besides, (*comes down again*) you weren't very polite to me yourself.

COMTE. Between such friends, politeness? Bah! we know one another too well! (*rises and moves C.*) But what am I thinking of? Of course you'd like to see my wife? (*goes to take him R.*)

VAL. Excuse me! (*pulls himself away and*

goes down L.) Not while she is inspecting family portraits.

COMTE. (*following him*) But I'll take no denial. You have a commission to execute and you must execute it.

VAL. Nonsense ! that's your business

COMTE. Now look here, Valclos, you're a sensible fellow, with no false delicacy about you ; what is the situation ? I buy a house, and you instal yourself here. I marry, and you appropriate my wife. I say nothing, I do nothing, I refuse you nothing. And the first little thing she asks for, you want me to refuse her.

VAL. No, I don't. Give her this equipage.

COMTE. But she can't possibly have it ; and you want *me* to tell her so—it's out of the question. (*going to him*) No, my dear Valclos, you must take the thick with the thin ; if you avail yourself of the privileges, you must accept the obligations. You've appointed yourself master of my house (*takes him by the R. arm and slowly drags him to R. C.*)—well, manage it !

VAL. But it's so awkward ! What am I to say to her ?

COMTE. (*stopping with VAL., C.*) You are a man of imagination, think of something. You are a man of eloquence, now is your opportunity. (*drags him R. again*)

VAL. (*breaking away from him*) Candale, I could almost believe you're ironical. Do you know, I sometimes begin to think that you're not quite as friendly to me as you pretend to be.

COMTE. (C.) Friendly as ever, (*patting VAL.'s shoulder*) my dear Valclos, friendly as ever ; but understand this, M. le chevalier, one thing I won't submit to, even from a friend, and that is ridicule !

Re-enter GENERAL, R. VALCLOS retreats and gets up L. C.

GEN. Candale ! six words !

COMTE. I'm at your service, General.

GEN. (*glaring at VALCLOS*) Alone ! (VAL. goes up C. a few steps)

COMTE. (*turns*) Is my wife dressed ?

GEN. She's at her prayers. The abbe's just come.

VAL. (*coming down c.*) An abbe ?

COMTE. Yes, I have given her a little abbe. It's *de rigueur*.

VAL. (*coming down c.*) Oh, but——

COMTE. (L. C.) Excuse me for not consulting you; but you know the establishment wouldn't have been complete. Go and have a look at him. Tell me if he'll do.

GEN. (R. C.) But, Candale, they're at prayers, I tell you. The abbe was on his knees.

COMTE. (*to VAL.*) Then I should lose no time, if I were you. (*exit CHEVALIER, crossing uncomfortably front GENERAL*)

GEN. M. le Comte de Candale ! (*motions him to sit*)

COMTE. (*sitting on settee*) Uncle ?

GEN. (*sitting R. of table R.*) I have seen your wife, and I shall not permit this to go further.

COMTE. Of what has she complained ?

GEN. My niece is an angel, and you are unworthy of her. I was deceived in you. I made this marriage, and it is mine to unmake. It is a mistake.

COMTE. No doubt it was a marriage of convenience ; but why unmake it, even if you could, when everything is going on so nicely ?

GEN. Nicely ?

COMTE. We are quite happy.

GEN. My niece has said nothing ; but it is easy enough to see what pain your proceedings are causing her.

COMTE. To what do you allude ?

GEN. This marquise. Do you deny the marquise ?

COMTE. Of course not. But do *you* deny the chevalier ?

GEN. (*rising*) Candale, of the two it is the chevalier whom I resent the more. I always thought you were a gentleman.

COMTE. I hope so.

GEN. Nobody knows your faults better than I do ; nobody regrets your follies more sincerely. But whenever I have heard of your indiscretions I have said to myself, Candale is young, Candale is foolish,

but Candale is a gentleman. The youth will learn wisdom, and the gentleman will remain. (*going a step to him; slowly and quietly*) I grieve to say I was mistaken. M. le Comte de Candale, you are not a gentleman.

COMTE. (*rising and drawing his sword. Raising his voice for the first time in the play*) Monsieur ! (*dropping it*) Uncle ! (*bends his head, lowering his sword*)

GEN. How dare you introduce M. le Chevalier de Valclos to my niece ?

COMTE. I did not.

GEN. What !

COMTE. (*very quietly*) I did not.

GEN. Then, where the deuce did she meet him ?

COMTE. At the convent. (*pause*)

GEN. They are old friends ?

COMTE. Old sweethearts.

GEN. (*gasps*) And knowing this, you opened your house to him ?

COMTE. Finding him under my wife's window, I said, " My dear Valclos, *there* is the front door."

GEN. You should have turned him out.

COMTE. And make a scene ? (*putting his sword back in its sheath*)

GEN. Grand Dieu ! what does a scene matter ? (*stamping down R.*) I have made a hundred.

COMTE. Other times, other manners.

GEN. Damned good manners too ! (*coming c.; then goes up R. C.*)

COMTE. (*turns*) Oh, my dear uncle, with all the merits of your generation and the faults of ours, you must admit we have progressed in manners. At least, we don't make ourselves ridiculous.

GEN. (*returning to c.*) Ridiculous ! that's it, in a nutshell ! But what's ridiculous ? In my days it was the complaisant husband ! in yours it's the faithful one !

COMTE. (*lightly*) Well, fashions change. (*moves L. a little and then returns*)

GEN. And what is the fashion now ? To affect what you don't feel, to dissimulate what you do ! to despise the virtues your forefathers cherished, and to cherish the vices they despised ! to substitute prayers

for religion, license for love! To have a wife who is somebody else's, and children who are nobody's! And have you ever thought where your example, your neglect, almost your precepts, may lead the purest wife?—in what abyss of shame your dread of ridicule may plunge you? Nephew, it is you who are ridiculous! It is I, the ridiculous generation, who will protect you from ridicule! It is I, my sister's brother, who will save my sister's child. (*moves up L. C., gets his hat and goes to door C.*)

COMTE. (*moving R.*) What are you going to do?

GEN. (*in doorway C.*) I hope I have still some influence with the king! The king has still some influence with Rome! I will annul this marriage! *exit C. off R.*

COMTE. (*crosses L. and sits on sofa*) Annul this marriage! (*a pause*) But I like the comtesse!

(Enter COMTESSE, R. *She comes to table R. ; stands looking at the COMTE for a moment.*

Com. (*steals quietly to his side, so that he doesn't hear her till she speaks*) M. le comte!

COMTE. (*starting*) Comtesse!

Com. I've come to ask your pardon. (*kneels by him and takes his hand*)

COMTE. Pardon? for what?

Com. For my unreasonable request! Why didn't you tell me?

COMTE. Tell you what, comtesse?

Com. That you are in difficulties.

COMTE. Difficulties?

Com. Oh, it's no use to dissemble. M. le chevalier has told me everything.

COMTE. May I ask what he has told you?

Com. Why, you can't give me what I asked for. Because—because—

COMTE. Go on!

Com. Oh, I don't like to say it! but believe me, I don't say it reproachfully—what right have I to reproach you?—because you are a gambler, and are ruined! (*the COMTE stares dumbfounded*)

COMTE. M. le chevalier has told you this?

Com. But don't be angry with him, or with me! See! In a workbag which my aunt slipped into my

hand when I took leave of her, I have just found this note for a thousand louis. (*takes a note from her bosom and gives it to him*) I know it isn't much, but every little helps. And then, there are my diamonds.

COMTE. My dear comtesse! you propose to give me diamonds! That is reversing the usual order of procedure.

COM. Well, let us reverse it. If they are of any use to you—

COMTE. Let me reassure your ladyship. I think M. de Valclos has somewhat exaggerated my difficulties. True, I am in a little temporary embarrassment, but of so trifling a nature that it would be sufficiently relieved if your ladyship would relinquish, what you must forgive me considering, a caprice.

COM. If that will meet the difficulty, pray think no more about it.

COMTE. (*rising*; COMTESSE *rises just after him*) I am none the less grateful to M. le chevalier, for revealing to me a trait in your ladyship's character, which, believe me, I appreciate. (*kisses her hand*) If I have not a wife, at least I have a friend. (*gives her back the note—bowing*)

COM. If I had met you earlier, perhaps I might have been more than a friend.

COMTE. You flatter me. (*bows and crosses front of her to R. C.*) Unhappily we were not destined to meet; and it is now too late.

COM. Too late?

COMTE. But I am detaining you. M. le chevalier must be growing impatient.

COM. Oh, he's been gone some time. (*moves L. a few steps*)

COMTE. He has paid you a very short visit.

COM. It was quite long enough; and as M. l'abbe was going the same way, I suggested that they should accompany one another.

COMTE. An excellent idea! M. l'abbe can show M. le chevalier the way to heaven; if, indeed, M. le chevalier does not lead him in another direction.

COM. (*going to him*) But why is it too late, M. le comte?

COMTE. Our uncle, the General, has intervened.

COM. (L. C.) What has he done ?

COMTE. He has gone straight to the king.

COM. The king ?

COMTE. To petition for an annulment of our marriage.

COM. And can the king annul it ?

COMTE. (R. C.) With the consent of the pope.

COM. (C.) But that would mean a scandal.

COMTE. Certainly.

COM. (a pause) It seems a pity.

COMTE. It does seem rather a pity.

COM. Then, as we are both of the same mind—

COMTE. (fingering his eyeglass) Perhaps he would be satisfied with a separation. (a pause)

COM. It seems rather early for a separation. We have hardly had time to make one another's acquaintance.

COMTE. It is perhaps a little premature. (*he turns his face to her; they catch each other's eye*)

COM. (casting her eyes down, moves L. and sits on sofa) Don't let us talk about such horrid things!

COMTE. What shall we talk about ?

COM. The ball !

COMTE. What ball, comtesse ?

COM. The ball you're going to take me to to-night. (*takes up a hand mirror from table and looks into it*)

COMTE. (looks disconcerted) To-night ?

COM. (laughing) How comical you look ! (*dropping the mirror*)

COMTE. How can you see me, with your back turned ?

COM. (lifting it up) In this mirror.

COMTE. The mirror !

COM. I've been looking at you for at least a minute.

COMTE. I am honored.

COM. (looking into mirror again) Oh, only out of curiosity ! This is the first time I've had a really good look at you. M. le comte, some women would call you handsome !

COMTE. Madame la comtesse ! (bowing)

COM. (looking at him coquettishly) Some women have such strange taste ! (looks again in the glass)

COMTE. (moves to chair R. C.; aside) Coquettish ! and with me ! Young—pretty—generous—piquante

—what do I want more ? (*surveys her through his eye-glass*) Diable ! she's handsomer than the marquise !

COM. (*putting the mirror down*) But about this ball ? (*the COMTE is ill at ease*) You appear disconcerted. Have I surprised a secret ? It was Marton who told me.

COMTE. Marton is apt to make herself too busy.

COM. Oh, never mind ! I have had all the pleasure of anticipation.

COMTE. But there is some misunderstanding, comtesse. (*going to her*) Nothing would have given me greater happiness than to have taken you ; but unfortunately I have an engagement.

COM. (*disappointed*) Another engagement ? But the mask and domino ?

COMTE. The mask and domino ? (*affecting ignorance*)

COM. You caught me trying them on.

COMTE. Oh, ye-s—ye-s. Some old domino of Marton's.

COM. Oh, no ; it was quite new ; and M. Jasmin brought it.

Re-enter JASMIN, c. from R., followed by a FOOTMAN in cerise and silver, who stands in doorway.

COMTE. Jasmin !

JAS. (*coming c. to COMTE and whispering*) M. le comte.—

COMTE. (*angrily*) Can't you see I'm engaged ?

JAS. Yes, but the domino, madame la marquise—
(COMTESSE rises)

JAS. (*sees her, throws up his hands*) Madame ! (*rushes up and bundles the FOOTMAN out. The COMTE goes up L. to table and gets his hat, anathematizing JASMIN*)

COM. (*who has seen the FOOTMAN; aside*) Cerise and silver. (*to the COMTE, who is standing up c.*) Pray don't let me detain you. (*curtseys*)

COMTE. It is good of you to excuse me, comtesse. (*bows*) I will be back immediately. (*exit COMTE, c. and off R.*)

COM. (*furious and half crying*) Then, it was not for me ! it was for the marquise ! and this engage-

ment? He is going with *her*! (comes down to table L.; rings) Marton!

Re-enter MARTON, R.

MAR. Madame la comtesse!

COM. You have told me an untruth!

MAR. I, an untruth, madame!

COM. That domino was not mine. M. le comte never intended to take me to this ball. Madame la Marquise d'Esparville is to be his companion. (moves up c.)

MAR. Madame has found it out! (whimpering and wringing her hands)

COM. (coming down c. again) Marton, I want to be present. I want to see them together.

MAR. (cheering up, instantly) Why not?

COM. Alas! I have no one to take me.

MAR. M. le chevalier!

COM. (with contempt) M. le chevalier! (moves L. c.; sits on sofa)

MAR. Oh, it's no use keeping him, if we don't give him something to do.

COM. To tell the truth, Marton, the chevalier and I aren't quite such good friends as we used to be. Only just now we parted rather coolly.

MAR. Oh, we can warm him up! A line—a word—a few bars on the harpsichord! (crossing in behind her to table)

COM. You think so?

MAR. (giving her the pen) Pen and ink. Here is some paper. (COMTESSE writes) I'll throw it through your window. He's just underneath. (gets to end of sofa L. C.)

Re-enter COMTE, c.; he puts his hat on table up L. and comes down c.

COM. (who has heard the COMTE enter; defiantly) There, Marton, you know where to take it. (gives MARTON the note, rises and curtseys, as if about to go) M. le comte!

COMTE. (stopping her) One moment, comtesse! I have altered my arrangements; and it will give me the greatest pleasure to escort you to the ball.

COM. I thank you, M. le comte ; but I too have an engagement for this evening. (*crosses front of him to R. ; exit R.* MARTON *crosses front of him to R. C.*)

COMTE. (*as she is going to door*) Stop, Marton ! what's that letter ? Where are you taking it ?

MAR. (*stopping at door with the letter in her hand*) Letter, monsieur ? I have no letter !

COMTE. True ! You have no letter, Marton. (*bowing*) I apologize. (*exit MARTON, R. ; rings bell on table R.*)

Re-enter JASMIN, c.

COM. Try and overtake the footman. Bring me back my note ; and say I will wait on madame la marquise immediately. (*goes down to L. C. ; exit JASMIN, C.*)

COMTE. (R.) What has come over me, to question servants ? (*a brilliant flourish on the harpsichord is heard off*) Can it be that I'm jealous ? I, Candale, jealous ! and of my wife, of all people. (*crosses R. and sits L. of table R. ; laughs*) It's too ridiculous ! (*harpsichord stops. Tries to laugh and breaks down in the attempt*) Nonsense ! I can't be jealous ! I won't be ! (*with contempt*) Jealous ! and of a puppy like de Valclos !

Re-enter CHEVALIER, C. ; he keeps his hat on.

VAL. (*letter in hand*) Hello ! you there again !

COMTE. (*aside*) He couldn't have chosen a better moment. (*rises*)

VAL. (*coming down L. C.*) Peste ! you never seem to go out !

COMTE. (R. C.) And yet, M. le chevalier, it appears to me I'm not as much at home as you are.

VAL. (C., giggling) Candale, you're out of sorts. (*giggling*) Anything I can do for you ? Any more commissions ? You know you may command me.

COMTE. (*rising*) I thank you, none. I have myself refused another request of my wife's ; perhaps that's why she has written to you.

VAL. You are aware that she has written to me ?

COMTE. (*pointing to letter*) There is no concealment about it. Then we play cards face upwards ?

VAL. Face upwards ! (*puts the letter in his pocket and goes up L.; taking up COMTE's hat, comes down again and presents it to him*) You generally have an appointment at this hour.

COMTE. (*taking his hat*) M. le chevalier, I have told you once, I will not suffer ridicule.

VAL. My dear Candale, you want all the amusement yourself ! Don't be selfish. Turn and turn about.

COMTE. You were inquiring as to my appointments. May I have the honor of making one with M. le chevalier.

VAL. To-morrow !

COMTE. In the park.

VAL. About twelve ?

COMTE. I shall wear my sword. (*moves up L. C. a little to end of sofa; VALCLOS bows and moves L. a little*)

Re-enter COMTESSE, R.

VAL. (*takes his hat off and bows*) Madame !

COM. (*defiantly*) I have sent for you, M. le chevalier, to ask you to be good enough to escort me, this evening, to the bal masque ! (*movement by COMTE*)

VAL. (*crossing over to her*) Madame la comtesse makes me the happiest of men. At what hour shall I call for her ?

COM. I shall expect you about eleven.

VAL. (*very lovingly*) About eleven ! Till to-night, comtesse ! (*bow and curtsey; goes up R.; cheekily*) Till to-morrow, comte ! (*exit CHEVALIER, C.*)

COMTE. (*coming down L.*) So when you asked me to escort you, madame, it was to ascertain whether you could count upon my absence ?

COM. (R. C.) Possibly. (*curtseys*)

COMTE. That is enough. (*bowing, puts his hat on sofa*)

Re-enter GENERAL, C.

GEN. (*coming down a little*) Ah ! there you both are ! Well, I have seen the king.

COM. Already !

GEN. When I take up a thing, I carry it through.

But you must both sign this petition. (*goes back of sofa to table L. Music*)

COMTE. (*takes up pen*) With pleasure, Général. (*pauses, turns to the COMTESSE*) After you, comtesse. (*she crosses to sofa; sits, takes the pen and signs, rises; hands the pen to the COMTE*) Monsieur! (*then crosses to R. C.; the COMTE bows, takes the pen, considers a moment whether he should sign or not. COMTESSE is standing R. C. watching him, she sees him hesitate and smiles wistfully and gladly; the COMTE sighs heavily, drops into settee and signs; as he flings down the pen, the COMTESSE drops into the chair L. of table R., buries her head in her hands, leans on table and bursts into tears*)

GEN. (*going over to her, above her chair*) Tears, comtesse?

COMTE. (*approaching her; gently and slowly*) Tears?

COM. (*brushing them from her eyes, rises defiantly*) But they are tears of joy! (*exit R.*)

CURTAIN.

ACT IV.

LIGHTING.

Same as Acts I. and III.

PROPS.

Petition for GENERAL.

Warrant for OFFICER.

Foot-stool L. of sofa.

Six muskets for soldiers.

SCENE.—*Same. The next morning.*

GENERAL discovered seated on sofa, deep in thought, leaning on his stick. Enter COMTESSE, R. GENERAL rises to receive her.

COM. (*coming to him*) Ah, my dear uncle! How good of you to come to me so quickly! I am so unhappy.

GEN. (*takes her hands*) Unhappy, when you are going to be separated.

COM. I know you'll scold me, but I must confess to somebody.

GEN. Where is the abbe ?

COM. You are my abbe ; only you can grant me *absolution*.

GEN. Well then, confess ! (*sitting on sofa and putting his stick down*)

COM. (*sitting on stool with an effort*) Last night I went to the bal masque.

GEN. Nothing else ?

COM. Yes !

GEN. Or my office would be a sinecure.

COM. I had an escort.

GEN. Ah !

COM. I knew you'd scold me, uncle !

GEN. You mean, you went with your husband ?

COM. No, uncle,—with M. le chevalier.

GEN. M. le chevalier ! Oh, that's of *no consequence*.

COM. Uncle !

GEN. I absolve you.

COM. You don't scold me ?

GEN. Why should I ? You did the correct thing.

COM. Uncle !

GEN. Since yesterday, I've been thinking I was becoming antiquated—out of touch with my generation. But I have seen the error of my ways. (COMTESSE *rises*) I renounce my paleozoic prejudice in favor of the domestic virtues ; I adopt your more enlightened morality ; and I find it replete with every modern convenience. (*rising and moving down L.*) Fichtre ! it shall never be said that I am too old to learn !

COM. Are you in earnest ?

GEN. (*smiling*) In grim earnest. (*moving a step to her*) So, you went to the ball—good girl !—with the chevalier ! I am proud of you.

COM. (*moves R. a step*) But I should never have gone if I had not been jealous !

GEN. Of the chevalier ? Just so !

COM. No, uncle ! Of my husband.

GEN. Chut ! (*looks round mysteriously, goes up*)

c., *listens and returns*) It's well that nobody was listening. If it got about—

COM. That I had been to the ball ?

GEN. That you were jealous of your husband ! You would be ruined—lost beyond redemption ! You would be pronounced provincial !

COM. Provincial or not—call me what you will—oh, when I saw that woman on his arm, I could have torn the mask from her face ! (*goes down R. a step and returns*)

GEN. (*comes down c. a step*) Tut ! Tut ! You would have done very wrong. Your husband was with the Marquise d'Esparville. You were with the Chevalier de Valclos. Everything en règle.

COM. (*sitting L. of table R.*) Uncle, you wouldn't jest if you knew what was the sequel ?

GEN. A sequel to so perfect a partie carrée ?

COM. As we were coming out, a young man pushed against me—

GEN. Accidentally ?

COM. Purposely !

GEN. My dear, accidentally.

COM. Involuntarily I clung to the chevalier.

GEN. Your natural protector.

COM. The chevalier took fire in a moment.

GEN. Ce brave chevalier !

COM. Some words passed between them, and I distinctly heard these, "My name is de Saillant, rue de Grenville, numero vingt-quatre. If you want satisfaction you can have it." I was so frightened, I could hear no more. (*rising and going R. a little*)

GEN. (*standing c.*) The chevalier of course had to reveal himself ?

COM. No ; he was masked, and, out of consideration for me, refrained from either his name or address.

GEN. (*smiling*) Ce brave chevalier ! I shall not rest till I've embraced him !

COM. (*coming c.*) That's why I sent for you. What am I to do ?

GEN. Ah ! you wanted my advice ?

COM. Yes.

GEN. (*smiling*) Not my absolution ?

COM. If it becomes known that I was alone with the chevalier at the bal masque—that I was hustled and insulted by a stranger—

GEN. What then? A pretty thing indeed, if a young married lady may not accompany her lover to a bal masque and if a perfect stranger may not hustle her! What's the world coming to? (*moving down L. a little*)

COM. But a brawl, uncle, almost in the street! M. le comte would never forgive me! (*goes down R.*)

GEN. (*coming to L. C.*) I should think not, indeed! Do as you please, but please to do it quietly. If you're found out, be compromised behind fans. But a fracas—a scandal! Faugh! it belongs to the last century.

COM. How am I to prevent it?

GEN. Easily enough! Insist on the chevalier not fighting.

COM. But he's a soldier! (*GENERAL grunts*) How can he draw back? Holding the king's commission?

GEN. And your husband's as well.

COM. How can I insist—

GEN. Who has a better right? Whom can you order about, if not the chevalier? It is his business to be ordered about. He is commissioned by your husband for that duty. Indeed he may soon be your husband.

COM. (*recoiling*) M. le chevalier my husband!

GEN. You will soon be free! At liberty to marry him, and to cease loving him. (*moving down L. a little*)

COM. (*moving to C.*) Suppose I have ceased already? Suppose I love somebody else?

GEN. What, there are two chevaliers? Well, why not? Why not a dozen chevaliers, or a gross?

COM. (*C., shyly*) Uncle I love my husband!

GEN. (*L. C.*) *Shame, comtesse, shame!* To think that I have lived to see this day, when a wife loves her husband!

COM. (*starts and listens, C.*) His footstep!

GEN. Fly, comtesse, fly! (*pushing her over to R. door*) If he divined your guilt, nothing would be left, except to die of remorse. (*exit COMTESSE, R., the GENERAL closes doors*)

Enter COMTE, c., hat in hand.

COMTE. Enter comte, exit comtesse ! (*puts down his hat on table L., takes off his gloves*)

GEN. (*indicating L.*) M. le comte. (*indicating R.*) Madame la comtesse ! (*comes to c.*) Well, I congratulate you !

COMTE. On what, I wonder ?

GEN. On your approaching marriage with Madame la Marquise d'Esparville.

COMTE. (*pulling at his gloves*) Whatever happens, General, that is out of the question.

GEN. Candale ! you would deprive that charming lady of the innocent enjoyment of a fourth divorce !

COMTE. (*sits on sofa*) Excuse me, uncle ; the jest is excellent, but I am scarcely in the mood to appreciate it. (*puts gloves in his pocket*)

GEN. (c.) Ha, ha, ha ! And M. de Valclos has no appetite for cold steel. The happy lovers are the unhappiest of men !

COMTE. M. de Valclos is under lock and key.

GEN. Who has put him there ?

COMTE. I have.

GEN. (*coldly*) Oh ! that is how modern philosophy protects its honor !

COMTE. Listen, General ! Last night M. de Valclos had a difference with a Monsieur de Saillant.

GEN. Rue de Grenville, numero vingt-quatre.

COMTE. You know ?

GEN. Your wife had told me.

COMTE. Well, I have set the constables upon his track.

GEN. With what object ?

COMTE. M. de Saillant doesn't know his enemy. Valclos was masked and I was just behind him. I heard, saw, everything.

GEN. Bravo ! The new morality ! You were watching ?

COMTE. (*rising*) Uncle, she was my wife.

GEN. No, no, no ! That's the old morality. You're getting mixed.

COMTE. New or old, what's morality to me ? There was my wife, there was I, close beside her. There was a stranger, who insulted her, I couldn't inter-

fered then ; (*crossing front of GENERAL to R.*) the marquise was on my arm. But I saw all that passed. It was a challenge. My mind was made up instantly. (*comes to C.*) The moment it becomes a question of fighting for the honor of the Comtesse de Candale, that is not Valclos' privilege ; it is mine, and the man doesn't live who shall deprive me of it.

GEN. Candale ! Candale !

COMTE. She may not love me, but I am her husband !

GEN. If she does love you !

COMTE. Does !

GEN. If it was jealousy took her to this ball !

COMTE. Jealousy of whom ?

GEN. Of you, you scoundrel, you !

COMTE. Uncle ! You king of uncles ! Greatest of generals ! Idiot that I am ! It is as clear as day ! My wife is jealous of me ! My wife loves me ! Uncle ! (*seizing the GENERAL's hands*)

GEN. Nephew, you are a gentleman after all ! (*shakes both hands warmly*)

Enter JASMIN, C.

JAS. M. le Chevalier de Valclos !

Enter CHEVALIER, hat in hand. Exit JASMIN, C.

COMTE. (*moving R. a little*) What !

GEN. The chevalier !

COMTE. Not in the Bastille !

VAL. (*coming down C.*) My dear Candale, do be serious for a moment. Here's a nice kettle of fish ! I can't find a second anywhere. Every one's out of town. And I've been searching Paris since daybreak.

COMTE. (*R. C.*) You've been out since daybreak ?

VAL. (*C.*) Word of honor !

COM. That's how they've missed you, then.

VAL. Who've missed me ?

COMTE. Chevalier, I'm so happy, I have a little happiness to spare. Won't you divide it with me ? You know we divide everything. Yesterday we had a foolish quarrel. To-day let us shake hands over it. (*shakes hands with VAL.*)

VAL. Then you throw down the cards ? (*laughs*)

COMTE. I throw down the cards.

GEN. (L.C.) There is a suggestion of a *divorce* between M. le comte and madame la comtesse.

VAL. (*disagreeably surprised*) Divorce !

COMTE. I make only one stipulation.

VAL. I am to marry madame ? (*stepping back*)

COMTE. And in that event I shall of course be privileged to pay her *my* addresses. In your own language, turn and turn about. In future *I* shall be the forbidden fruit.

GEN. That is the sweetest.

VAL. Oh, but give me time to think. I'm not sure whether I score.

GEN. Ce brave chevalier !

VAL. (*coming down a step*) But in one respect the arrangement suits me admirably. Now, that we're friends again, you can be my second. (*pats the COMTE on the back*) I have another little matter in hand.

COMTE. No, no, de Valclos ; it seems to me I've been your second long enough. And now that there is a possibility of my wife becoming yours, I claim the privilege of defending her.

VAL. She's told you ?

COMTE. I am now the principal in this trio.

VAL. Now I see what you are driving at. You are aware that I was incognito—

COMTE. That the rendezvous is my neighbor, the Duc de Marsin's garden, not a hundred yards off—that it only wants ten minutes to the appointed hour—

VAL. (*losing his temper*) And you propose to rob me of my rights !

COMTE. (*strongly*) *My* rights now, Valclos ; and I mean to exercise them. Somehow you have given the constables the slip ; but you won't escape me so easily ; and I must ask you to be so kind as to remain here quietly, until the little matter is settled.

VAL. (*drawing back*) To remain here, a prisoner ?

COMTE. (*correcting him*) An honored guest. I will do everything to make you comfortable, and perhaps madame la comtesse may be induced to entertain you in our absence. (*rings bell on table R.*)

VAL. (*comes down C. a few steps*) Are you two making sport of me ?

COMTE. (*soothingly*) Chevalier!

VAL. I may be no match for you in wits, but I can fight as well as you, Candale. (*goes up c. in dudgeon*)

GEN. You wish to fight, M. le chevalier? (*gets round table L. and following him up*)

Enter MARTON, R.

VAL. (*comes down a step*) I'm just in the humor.

COMTE. Madame la comtesse—ask her to be good enough! (*exit MARTON, R.*)

GEN. (*tapping VALCLOS on the shoulder*) Monsieur, I have done you an injustice. (*shakes his hands*)

Re-enter COMTESSE, R.; MARTON *shuts doors*.

COMTE. Comtesse, as we are soon to be separated, let us make the most of the interval that remains to us. A matter of business necessitates my absence for a few minutes; but I hope to see you again on my return.

COM. I shall await you, M. le comte.

COMTE. (*taking her hand affectionately; with feeling*) If our parting should come sooner than we expected, I hope we part friends?

COM. I hope more than *friends*. But this is not good-bye?

COMTE. I trust not. (*kisses her hand, crosses to sofa L.*)

VAL. (*aside*) They're beginning already! (*moving down a step*) Where do I come in?

COMTE. (*taking up his hat from table*) The General accompanies me. (*meaning he is not going to the MARQUISE*) In our absence, oblige me once more, by entertaining M. le chevalier. (*the CHEVALIER comes down and bows to the COMTESSE*)

COM. (*seeing him for the first time*) M. le chevalier; I didn't see him. (*curtseys*)

VAL. I've been here some time. (*stiffly; moves up R. C.*)

GEN. (*aside, crossing over to COMTESSE*) You understand? We leave him in your custody. (*an expression of intelligence crosses her face*) Come, Candale. (*goes up followed by COMTE*)

VAL. (*going up*) No, no, not without me.

COM. Monsieur le chevalier ! (*sits R. of table R.*)
One word before you go.

VAL. It must be only one. (*exeunt GENERAL and COMTE, c.; they shut the doors*)

COM. Won't you sit down ? (*indicates the seat opposite her*)

VAL. (*coming down to her*) Excuse me, madame la comtesse, but I have an important engagement.

COM. It is of that I wish to speak to you. Confused as I was last night, I couldn't fail to understand your altercation with M. de Saillant, and I can guess what your engagement is.

VAL. Indeed, madame !

COM. This duel must not take place.

VAL. It's unavoidable. (*sits uneasily L. of table, and puts his hat on table*)

COM. I know that I am asking you to make a great sacrifice, but if there were a duel the reason of it could not be kept secret. Think of the consequences : Madame la Comtesse de Candale, at a bal masque, with M. le Chevalier de Valclos—a vulgar brawl in the vestibule of the opera-house—a duel—and inquiry by the constabulary—an arrest—perhaps a death. What would be said of me ?

VAL. What would be said of you ? Why, that M. le Comte de Candale was a recognized leader of fashion ; and that his young bride, Mademoiselle Louise de Torigny, fresh from the convent at Soissons, had lost no time in following his example. That's what would be said of you—neither more nor less—and you would become a leader of society yourself.

COM. I have no wish to be such a leader. And to be the heroine of a scandal would be terrible.

VAL. (*rising*) Yet, you propose to be the heroine of a divorce !

COM. I have done nothing to deserve to be divorced, nor shall I.

VAL. (*moves c.*) Well, separated ; it comes to the same thing.

COM. I am not separated yet.

VAL. (*c.*) Now, we are getting near the truth, comtesse. (*moves a step to her*) You have no wish to be separated. (*moves another step*) You have forgotten your promise. You have fallen in love with

your husband. In a word, you have jilted me. (*goes back to c. and stamps his foot impatiently*)

COM. Perhaps it is best I should speak plainly. (*rising*) We women are not mistress of our hearts ; and mine is no longer my own. It is M. le comte's. (*crossing to sofa. VAL. pulls himself together*)

VAL. Louise ! Louise !

COM. My honor is now his and I cannot allow it to be attainted.

VAL. (*losing his temper*) And is my honor nothing ? M. de Saillant doesn't know me ; he hasn't seen my face ; hasn't heard my name. But M. de Saillant knows that he expects a gentleman, and he shall not be disappointed. (*goes up and tries to open door, c., tries again, rattles it and shakes it*) Locked ! this is a trap ! And you, madame, are a party to it ; you have conspired with M. le comte to detain me here, whilst he keeps my appointment and impersonates me ! (*coming down R. C.*)

COM. (*rising in terror*) M. le comte is fighting !

VAL. Yes ; and to complete the insult, locks me up, alone with you ! (*goes up R. C. in great dudgeon*)

COM. (*with a revulsion of pleasure*) Fighting for me !

VAL. (*coming down R. C.*) No, for me, madame !

COM. (*rushing R., to him*) Save him, chevalier ! Go and take his place ! You can get through my room ! You know the way.

VAL. Plague take it ! No ! Good luck to de Saillant !

COM. (*moving to c.*) If they should wound him, if he should be killed !

VAL. You'll make a very interesting widow.

Re-enter GENERAL, c.

COM. (*rushing up to him, c.*) Uncle, why didn't you tell me ?

VAL. (*moving up R. C.*) General, let me pass !

GEN. You are too late, M. le chevalier. The first thrust settled it.

COM. But my husband ! Where is he ?

GEN. I left him, thanking M. de Saillant for having given him the opportunity of defending you.

VAL. (*backing down R.*) M. le Comte de Candale

has usurped my privilege—the right of avenging an insult. (*putting his hand to the hilt of his sword*)

GEN. When the Comtesse de Candale is insulted, it is for the Comte de Candale to avenge her. (*goes down R. C.*)

VAL. Then, do I count for nobody in this house ?

Re-enter COMTE, c.

COM. (*throwing herself into his arms*) Ah ! you have fought for me ! You love me then !

COMTE. (*embracing her*) Louise !

GEN. (*to COMTE*) Is he much hurt ?

COMTE. (*holding COMTESSE*) A mere scratch.

VAL. (*down R.*) General, I ask you, do I count for nobody ?

Enter JASMIN, c.

JAS. (*in great excitement*) M. le comte, the house is full of constables !

COMTE. Constables—constables—why, what—

Re-enter MARTON, R., in terror; enter two CONSTABLES and an officer, c.; two CONSTABLES enter from R. and L. doors; SUISSE follows at back and stands up c. outside doors.

OFFICER. (*coming down c.*) M. le Chevalier de Valclos ? (*looks round*)

VAL. (*crossing to R. of him*) That is my name.

OFFICER. In the name of the King, and of messeigneurs the Marshals of France, I arrest you !

VAL. Me !

COM. Arrest de Valclos ? On what charge ?

OFFICER. (*to VALCLOS*) Haven't you just fought a duel ?

VAL. Monsieur !

OFFICER. Haven't you wounded M. de Saillant ?

COMTE. (*crossing in front of COMTESSE to the OFFICER*) No, it was I, Monsieur le Comte de Candale.

OFFICER. (*c., looking at his papers*) The name upon my papers—the gentleman against whom an information was lodged this morning, is M. le Chevalier de Valclos ; and it was you, monsieur le comte, who lodged it.

VAL. A friend of mine ! and he is trying to protect

me. Eh, Candale ? (*crossing to COMTE*) Aren't you a friend of mine ?

COMTE. Valclos !

VAL. (*elbows the COMTE*) Monsieur l'officer, I am at your disposal ; but may I not be permitted to take leave of my friends ? (*OFFICER bows, makes signs for the two men on each side to go up and goes up himself*)

COMTE. What are you doing, chevalier ?

VAL. Peste ! Let me do something ! Go into the country. To-morrow they'll discover their mistake ; I shall be set free and you'll be—on your honeymoon ! (*bowing to COMTESSE*) I shall cut rather a ridiculous figure, but, perhaps, it won't be for the first time.

COMTE. Valclos, is it you ! (*wringing one hand*)

GEN. (*wringing the other*) There speaks my old friend's son !

COMTE. But how can I sacrifice your liberty—

VAL. What use is it to me ? You've deprived me of my occupation ; and having stepped into my shoes you can't refuse me an old pair of yours. (*music P. P.*) Madame ! (*bows to her—she smiles and holds out her R. hand for him to kiss ; crosses slowly to her delighted*) For your sake ! (*drops on one knee and kisses her hand, rises ; goes up c.*) Messieurs ! (*draws his sword*) I am your prisoner. (*gives his sword to OFFICER and salutes ; the GENERAL hands him his hat ; he is surrounded by the soldiers ; they exit c. and off R. ; JASMIN and MARTON bow and curtsey to him and exit R. and L. respectively*)

GEN. (*going up c.*) Who would have thought it ?

COMTE. I shall miss de Valclos. (*crossing down R.*)

GEN. But you've no time to lose. Good-bye ! Or they will be on your heels.

COM. Won't you come with us, uncle ?

GEN. How can I ? I have important business in Paris.

BOTH. Business.

GEN. (*drawing the petition from his pocket*) Your petition to his Majesty !

COM. (*dropping on her knees*) Uncle !

COMTE. Tear it up ! (*dropping on his knees*)

GEN. (*tears it up and places a hand upon the head of each.*)

CURTAIN.

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2. It is no defence that the performance was in aid of a charity or by amateurs.

In the case of *Byron v. Finch*, tried before Theobald Purcell, Esq., County Court Judge at Limerick, in January, 1880, Mr. Connolly for the defence said:—"Was not the performance in aid of Barrington's Hospital? Mr. Byron wants to prevent us from being charitable here." The Judge said "There is no use in these observations, Mr. Connolly. If the Histrionic Society want to be charitable they cannot be so at Mr. Byron's expense." And in the case of *French v. Styles*, tried at the Bloomsbury County Court, London, in February, 1881, the defendant contended "that as he had not been paid for his services, and the performance was for the benefit of another member of the Club, he was not liable." The Judge, Francis Bacon, Esq., said "The law was very clear, and the defendant was liable."

3. It is immaterial where the performance takes place.

"What is said by all the Judges just comes to this, that the very first time you use a place for the performance of a dramatic piece, that constitutes the place then for the first time a 'Place of Dramatic Entertainment.' 'Palmer v. Brassington.' Judgment of Thomas Ellison, Esq., Judge of the County Court of Yorkshire, holden at Sheffield. "The use for the time in question, and not for a former time, is the essential fact. 'Russell v. Smith,' 12 Q. B., N.S., 217."

4. It is no defence that money was not taken.

"Although in the case of 'Russell v. Smith,' reference was made to the fact that no charge was made at the door, that was no element at all in considering the question whether a place is a place of Dramatic Entertainment. 'Palmer v. Brassington.'"

Fees, however, need not be paid for performances taking place in a private dwelling house to invited guests, where no money or consideration be taken for admission, tickets or programmes sold, or a collection made.

5. Performances by Private Clubs.

In the action *French v. Theobalds and others*, judgment was given in the Queen's Bench Division for separate penalties and for costs against the President and Secretary respectively of a Club when a dramatic piece was performed to an audience composed of members, and although no charge was made for admission, the subscription of membership was held to be the consideration for admission."

6. The fee must be paid prior to performance.

In the case of *French v. Dye*, heard at the Camberwell County Court, the defendant contended that he had tendered the fee after the performance, but that the plaintiff had refused to accept it. The Judge said that the law clearly stated that consent in writing of the Author or Proprietor must be first had and obtained, and gave judgment for the plaintiff for the full penalty and costs.

It is not required by law to have a notice printed on a play, to the effect that it is copyright, and a play must not be considered free because it does not contain such notice.

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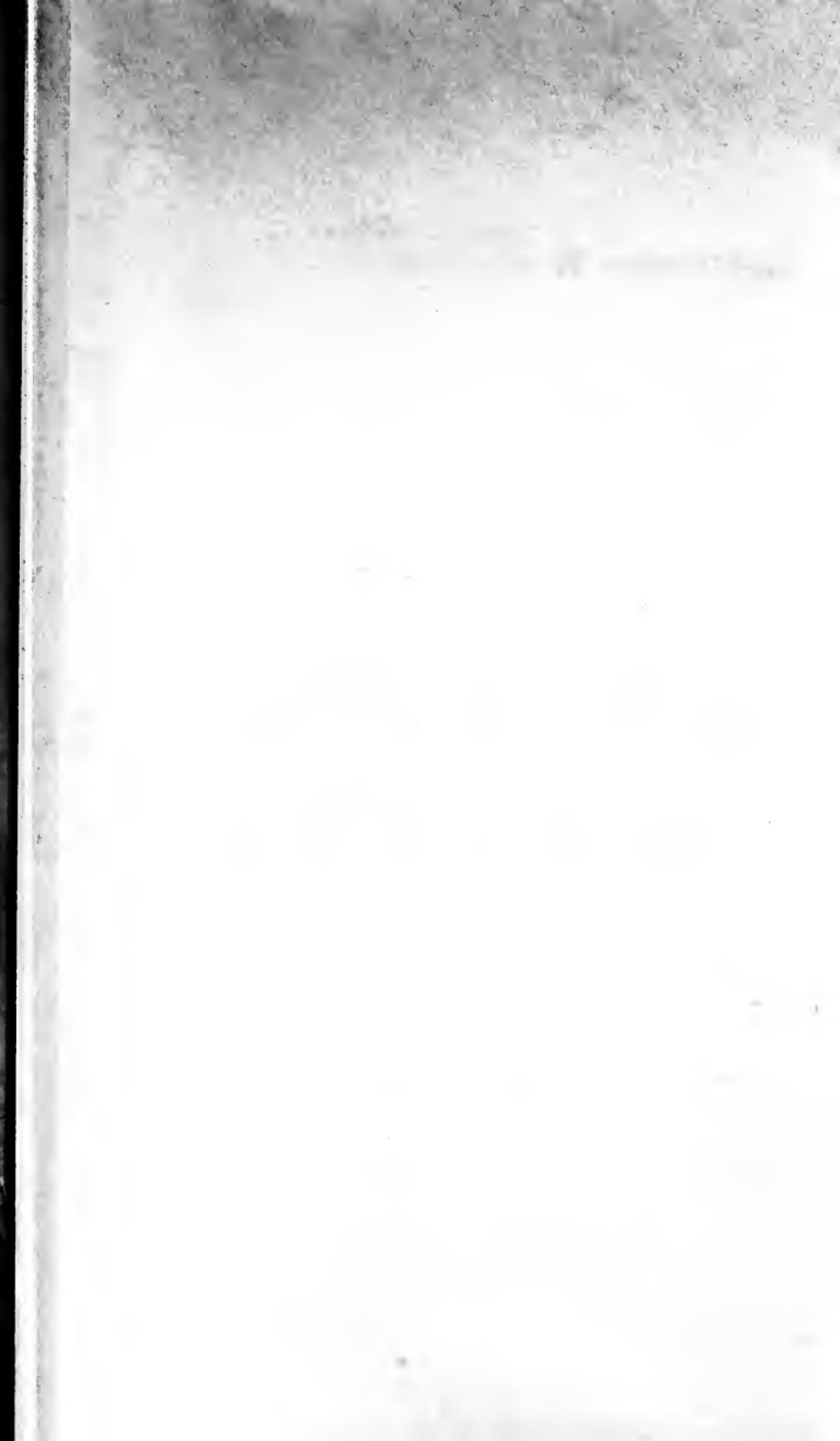
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